

# THE STAR

NEWSLETTER

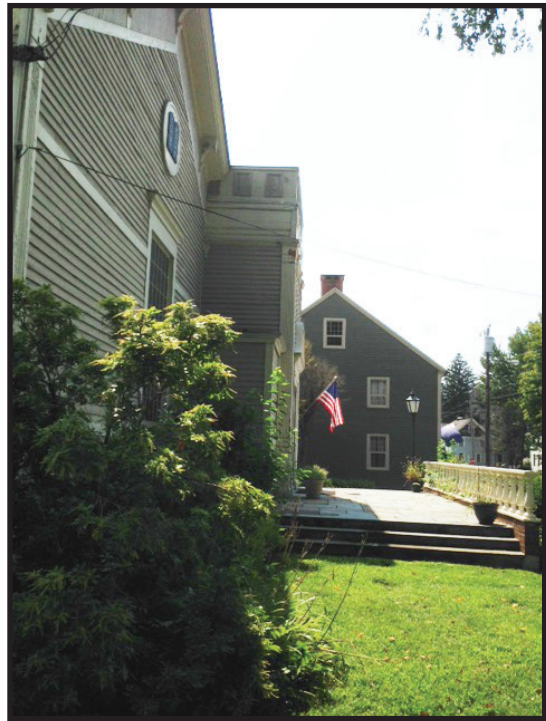
SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2018

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VOL. 21 NO. 3

TEMPLE BETH TORAH, 130 MAIN STREET

WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT





## Rabbi Seth's Rosh Hashanah Greeting

I have served as your rabbi for ten years. It went by in a flash, and time really did fly while I was having fun! I hope you were having fun too. The overall tenor of my time among you has been: enjoyment. I feel tremendously honored to be with you at TBT, and I look forward to the celebration, in October, of our time together so far.

Among the great pleasures in my rabbinical work (which, at TBT, is akin to play) are those I receive from preparing our children for bar/bat mitzvah, and we're fortunate to have two b'nai mitzvah coming up to the bimah soon. I'm lucky to have students who are honest, thoughtful and Jewishly committed.

They're honest even in telling me that the party following the service, just as much as or more than the learning in preparation for it, is what floats their boats. They're thoughtful, as I can tell when, so often, I come away from our lessons with deep insights the student expresses in a casual, often humorous way. And they're Jewishly committed in the spirit of this synagogue community that validates the interaction between religion and life—the students recognize and can explain that connection and so understand how to apply our Torah and Rabbinic teaching to the realities of the world they know.

Even while we have our challenges as a congregation small in population, we are blessed with a membership notable for its curiosity and creativity. I suppose you could say I'm biased in thinking so, but I've been around the Jewish universe a bit, and I am often struck by how philosophically refined, mentally active and eager to learn our people are. A recent example is the first (in my experience at

TBT) July Torah study session. This past year, the Shabbat morning Torah study group met every month from September through June and was prepared to take our usual summer hiatus. Then several of our regular participants brought up the idea—which they'd talked about in previous years but never acted upon—to extend the schedule by one month. That session, graciously hosted by one of the couples involved, went well.

Speaking of Torah, I am happy to report that the dedicated sofer (Torah scroll scribe) who has been working for months on repairing and restoring two of our Torah scrolls is approaching completion of that monumental task. As I write this, one scroll is done, and the other, in which he encountered serious problems, is nearly done. I have been in communication with him during all of this time, and I can tell that he performs his holy work with an attitude of great dedication and in a spirit of profound humility.

In my duties as your rabbi, I aspire toward a similar attitude and spirit. You have touched my life and soul with your kindness. You've opened your hearts to me—taught me the meaning of hesed, covenantal love. On this life journey we travel from day to day, year to year, in the hope that we'll have strength and joy sufficient to endure our travails and ensure our well-being. You have given me joy and strength. Year to year, every day, I am praying for yours.

Please accept my sincere wishes for shanah tovah umtukah, a good and sweet year.

# Sallyanne Scott on Rabbi Seth

## My Friend Rabbi Seth

I have known Rabbi Seth for over 20 years. He was the Rabbi in Middletown, where Barry and I were members. Seth prepared our younger son Aaron, for his Bar Mitzvah, which was an amazing experience. Our Aaron marches to a different drummer and sees the world a bit differently than others, to say the least. He is smart, inquisitive and always questioning. This got him into a bit of hot water when preparing for his D'var Torah, which was a bit unconventional but interesting and informative, just the same. Rabbi Seth "convinced" the powers that be, that it was perfectly fine to go that route. Perhaps that is why Seth means so much to me and my family. He gets it! He gets most everything!

So when he decided to try a different path, the Scott family followed. Aside from being my spiritual leader, he is my friend! Seth is never afraid to express his opinions or feelings. He is a straight shooter and tells it how it is. A quality I value and find refreshing in a world where everyone is so politically correct.

It wasn't until I joined TBT, that I started to attend Shabbat Services on a fairly regular basis. They reminded me of the services we had at summer camp, which were really wonderful. I once again felt connected to my faith. Being part of the TBT family gave me a place to relax and find my spirituality. Rabbi Seth made that very easy. I look forward to his weekly D'var Torah discussions, the singing accompanied by his guitar, the warm feeling of togetherness, and of course, the oneqs!

I feel blessed to have Seth as a friend. His advice, his vast knowledge, his understanding and compassion, have all affected my life, certainly for the better.

So dear Seth, Mazel Tov on ten years at TBT and here's to many more!

# Sign up for Salute to Rabbi Seth Sunday Oct. 14

## Temple Beth Torah Brunch

To honor Rabbi Seth Riemer,  
on his tenth anniversary as Spiritual Leader of  
Temple Beth Torah

Sunday, October 14th, 2018  
11:30am-1:30pm at  
Temple Beth Torah

Please join us for an elegant brunch catered  
by The Crown

RSVP by October, 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

The \_\_\_\_\_ Family will be attending

\_\_\_\_\_ number of adults

\_\_\_\_\_ number of children

In lieu of gifts for Rabbi Seth's Celebration, a donation to Temple Beth Torah would be greatly appreciated.

Please make donations out to Temple Beth Torah and send with this form to:

Sallyanne Scott  
105 Sunmeadow Drive  
East Berlin, CT 06023  
860-828-3377  
[batsps53@gmail.com](mailto:batsps53@gmail.com)

# Wethersfield & Newington Life Newspaper has a great story by our own Mara Dresner, celebrating Rabbi Seth's decade at Temple Beth Torah

The Star can't reproduce all the pages here  
but you can read it all online at:

[https://view.publitas.com/p222-6222/w1\\_0918\\_layout/page/1](https://view.publitas.com/p222-6222/w1_0918_layout/page/1)  
[https://view.publitas.com/p222-6222/w1\\_0918\\_layout/page/4-5](https://view.publitas.com/p222-6222/w1_0918_layout/page/4-5)



Rabbi Seth Riemer, third from right, has been involved with interfaith efforts, both organized and informal.

## Celebrating a milestone

Rabbi Seth Riemer celebrates a decade at Temple Beth Torah

by Mara Dresner  
Staff Writer

When Rabbi Seth Riemer first tried exploring his Jewish connections, he didn't exactly receive a warm welcome. "It was around the time of my bar mitzvah service in Milwaukee in the mid-'60s, the late '60s. I'd figured out I was a pretty spiritually oriented person. I actually remember having an appointment with the rabbi of my Reform temple to ask him about going to Israel. And he sort of mocked it," he recalled.

seven years, I pretty much was distanced from Jewish things."

After getting married, his wife Barbara Checknoff wanted to join a synagogue in the town where Riemer was studying for his Ph.D.

"That year we connected both with the synagogue and the Hillel rabbi; this was at Cornell [University]. It was more the Hillel rabbi and sort of the 'chavurah' atmosphere that got me thinking. I spoke with him [Rabbi Larry Edwards] as I was struggling, as many grad students are, and he made me make a promise, which was, 'You've got to get your Ph.D. and

around and returning to my spirituality."

He credits Checknoff with helping him in that process.

"Barbara was a major influence in reconnecting me to my yiddishkeit: my Jewish values, energies, commitments, activities. She came from a Reform background, as did Larry, by the way. She had grown up comfortable within her Jewishness.

"My formative Jewish journey had been a little more uncomfortable and a little more complicated. She wanted to have a Jewish life. I was a little more secular. I quickly took to those waters," he recalled.

learning about how to be Jews. I remember speaking with the dean at the time, who was about to become the head of the college, Rabbi Arthur Green," he said.

Green asked him why he wanted to be a leader.

"I demurred. I said, 'I don't think I really want to be a leader. I don't believe communities should have leaders.' He said, 'Basically I agree with you, but you need leaders to help people be able to do it themselves.' That stuck with me," Riemer said.

He also has an undergraduate degree from Harvard University and

plus 2 more pages

# TBT Book Club

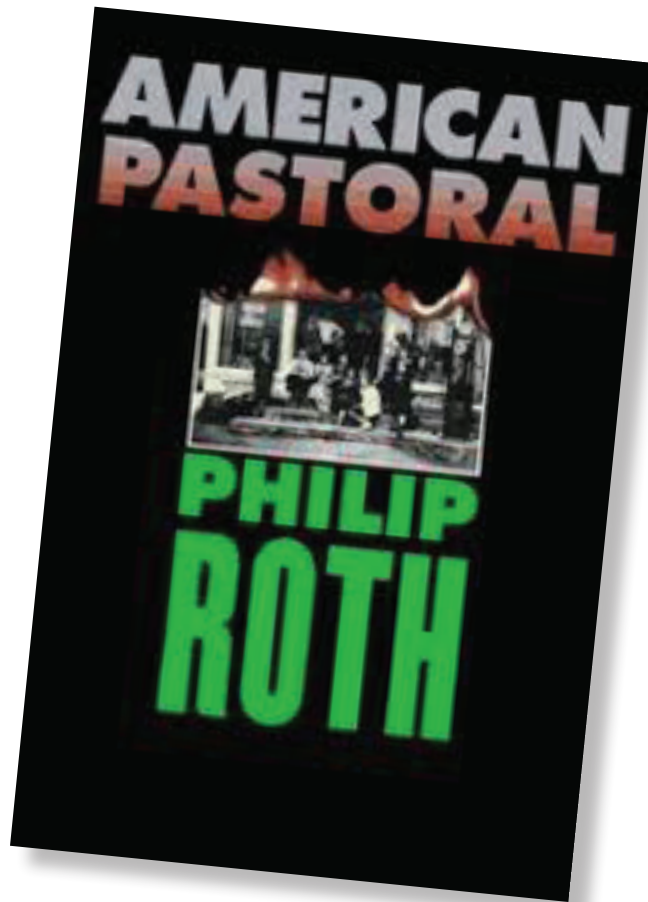
The TBT Book Club is reading Philip Roth's book *American Pastoral*. It is a depressing discussion of the years after World War II and the generation opposing the Vietnam War.

It tells of how a family is messed up by the turmoil and generational differences at that time.

We are also each reading some other book by Roth.

We will discuss these books at TBT on Thursday, September 13th. at 3 PM.

All are welcome to join us.



You can contact

**Cecile Brofin** ([cecile\\_brofin@yahoo.com](mailto:cecile_brofin@yahoo.com))

for further information.





**A big thank you**  
to all who participated in  
**Honey From  
the Heart**



Honey purchases supports the work of  
ORT America and our wonderful  
Temple Beth Torah

Kathi and Eliot Mag  
Judy and Marty Gold  
Micki and Dennis Bellamy  
Deborah and Aaron Jainchill  
Cheryl and John Hinze  
and Sharon and Alan Reisner

**May you all be blessed  
for a happy, healthy New Year!**



# KVELL KORNER

## Lily Hammer Graduates

Deb and Joe Hammer's daughter

**Lily Hammer**

has graduated cum laude and with honors from  
Kingswood Oxford.

And now she is at Vassar College!!



# KVELL KORNER

On June 16th

## Hannah Horowitz and Cristian Proistesescu

celebrated their 2nd wedding for friends and family at the Indian Hills Country Club in Newington.

It was a beautiful day. 150 were in attendance.

They had been legally married on March 8th in

Cambridge, MA in a civil ceremony.

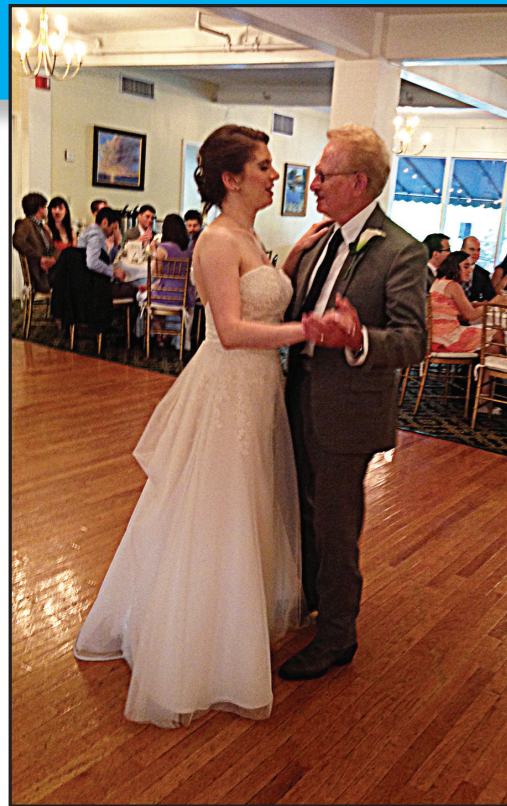
This time, in Newington, guests attended from Canada,

France and Romania and from many parts of the United States.

A 3rd wedding will be held on September 22nd in Romania.

Ralph and Maureen will be flying to Romania

to attend the ceremony there. All are invited.



Ralph and Maureen  
are the proud parents.



Geraldeen and Phil  
were proud and happy guests.

## TBT B'nai Mitzvah news

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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**

# End of An Era for Windsor Synagogue

*From The Hartford Courant - June 2018*

Congregation Beth Ahm is merging with Temple Beth Hillel of South Windsor. The Berkshire Hathaway real estate sign that hangs in the front of Congregation Beth Ahm serves as a stark reminder to members of — and visitors to — Windsor’s only synagogue, that the end is near.

The 58-year-old building hosted its last B’nai Mitzvah service a few weeks ago. Earlier this week, Rabbi Alan Lefkowitz cleaned out his office, and on Saturday morning he led its final Shabbat prayer service.

On Sunday, members of Beth Ahm and of Temple Beth Hillel in South Windsor, who will merge together, will participate in a symbolic Torah walk, carrying a scroll 10 miles from its old home to its new one.

Next week, the moving vans will load up the ark, memorial boards, artwork and other important belongings for the trip to South Windsor.

Other items, including two Torahs, will be donated to the Hebrew Center for Health and Rehabilitation and Beth David Synagogue in West Hartford; a third is heading to Washington, D.C., for refurbishing before it goes to a congregation in Cuba. The congregation also is donating some artifacts to the Windsor Historical Society and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford.

“I don’t like it at all,” said Len Hellerman, who has been a member of the congregation since the 1950s, when it held services and started a religious school in a local church. “The thought that it won’t be a part of Windsor is frankly upsetting.”

As difficult as it is, the end for Beth Ahm has not come as a surprise to longtime members who saw the congregation shrink from 105 families just 10 years ago to fewer than 60 families now.

The religious school blended with Beth Hillel in

early 2016, and members of the congregation have been discussing their survival and future for the past two years.

“We saw less participation, fewer young people and families with young children,” said Marcia Heneson, a member of the executive committee who has been with the congregation since 1983. “And no one was stepping up into leadership roles.”

As a member of the executive committee, finding a new home was part of Heneson’s job.

She said a committee looked at several possible candidates for mergers before deciding — with the congregation — at the end of January that Beth Hillel was the best fit.

In late March, the congregation voted to begin negotiations to merge Beth Ahm and its membership with Beth Hillel.

Both congregations must still vote to approve the merger, but Heneson is confident that will happen and expects it to become official in July.

Members of Beth Ahm have been welcomed to participate services in South Windsor since the religious school moved there.

Heneson said there were several reasons Beth Hillel was an attractive choice for Beth Ahm, even though the synagogue in South Windsor is Reform and Beth Ahm is considered “modern conservative.” “We’re known for if you walk in the door you will be welcomed. There are no strangers,” she said. “That happened at Beth Hillel. They come up to you and talk to you. If you are alone they will sit with you. They want to make sure you’re comfortable.” It was also important to members of Beth Ahm that their history become a part of the history of Beth Hillel.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



## End of An Era for Windsor Synagogue continued

To that end, the memorial boards and art work will be on display, the ark will be placed in a sanctuary and be available for services and their Torah will be used regularly for readings.

“It’s our history, it’s our culture, it’s our social connections,” she said.

Lastly, Henson said, the members wanted to go to a place where they could make a difference, share their experiences, from fundraising to cooking to praying together.

Rabbi Jeffrey Glickman has been guiding Temple Beth Hillel since 1996 and also serves on the South Windsor Town Council.

Glickman said his congregations hopes to make the Windsor congregation feel welcome at Temple Beth Hillel. There will be shared leadership, and Beth Ahm artwork and the names of the deceased will be displayed, he said.

“There’s a lot of excitement,” he said of the merger. “We are not all that different. They are coming from a long history and that long history was intermeshed with the town. Not just as a house of worship, but also Windsor’s history. ... Now they are about to become part of South Windsor’s history and we want to welcome them to that.”

Glickman also lamented the closures of five “monumental” synagogues across the state “Unfortunately, people don’t make as many commitments to the community anymore,” he said. “It’s hard. It’s really hard to say goodbye. But people on both ends, I think, have been gracious and welcoming. It’s a blessing to say that every time you fall, someone will catch you. They couldn’t walk anymore, so we caught them. I think the better analogy would be strength to strength. They aren’t withering away. At a time of strength, they decided to move.”

On Thursday, Beth Ahm hosted an open house of appreciation for current and former members, as well as local businesses, residents and organi-

zations, to thank them for their friendship over the years.

The event included an ongoing video presentation with historic and memorable photos from nearly seven decades of Beth Ahm’s history. Nearly 160 people attended, including Linnea Gilbert, who made the trip from her home in Virginia. Gilbert joined the congregation in 2003 and remained a member after moving out of state in 2016.

“I wanted to be here for the people and I’m saddened to see them closing,” said Gilbert, who plans to keep her membership and attend services in South Windsor when she is in the state.

“I want to have a place to go,” she said.

Members of the congregation also have some certainty about the future of the building: The Hope Tabernacle Apostolic Church, which has leased space there since 2011, has made an offer to buy it. The closing is expected before the end of June.

Still, even though things have worked out well, Henson acknowledged that the sadness remains, although it only “comes to the surface occasionally.”

“I’m sure we’re going to be basket cases on Sunday,” she said. “We’re declassifying this building [as a Jewish house of worship], so that will be rough.”

Glickman said Sunday will be a “monumental” day for both congregations. As soon as the walkers stand on the Bissell Bridge to take their 10-mile walk over the Connecticut River into South Windsor, the celebration will begin.

“It will be a re-enactment of crossing the Red Sea,” he said. “It will move from somber to festive. There will be singing and dancing. It will be a moment in Connecticut history.”

# FALL SCHOOL STUFF

Hebrew School classes meet on Sunday mornings 9 - 11.

The first day the parents should come in for a 10 minute meeting.

We will distribute the challah list then. If you know any potential new students, please inform Karen Klein. It is important that the children attend services and holiday celebrations as well as Hebrew School.

We plan to have a Junior Congregation program for the First morning of Rosh Hashana and the morning of Yom Kippur.

Sept. 16 1st day of school  
Sept. 23  
30  
Oct. 7 No HS Columbus Day  
Oct. 14  
21  
28  
Nov. 4  
11 No School Veterans Day  
18  
25 No School Thanksgiving weekend  
Dec. 2  
9  
16  
23 no school Vacation week  
30 no school  
Jan. 6  
13  
20 no school MLK Day  
27

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

One modification for the first day, 9/16 - the marketing team is putting out publicity for the School, including an Open House from 9-10am on the 16th. Current students should attend that day, but parents need to know it's just an hour. The purpose is two-fold - a briefer intro for any interested families (hope, hope!) and it also gives Seth plenty of time to get to the memorial service sched for 11am.

## **New Year Greetings to date (contact Judy Gold)**

Rabbi Seth Riemer and Barbara Checknoff

Micki and Dennis Bellamy

Cecile and Barry Bronfin, Michael, Lesley, Ian and Tabitha Brovner, Wendy, Brian and Eleanor Bloom and Barbara Friedsam

Alice Burstein and Family

Valerie and Evelyne Carpenter

Mara Dresner

Carol Ann Gershenson

Judy and Marty Gold Monica, Lee, Jack and Adam Gold, Deborah, Aaron, Ryan and Zachary Jainchill

Lynn Kaplan-Goldberg and Barry Goldberg, Michelle and Bill, Brett, Elizabeth and Evan, Lee

Debra and Joe Hammer, Sam and Lily

Ralph, Maureen & Hannah Horowitz

Phil and Geraldeen Lohman

Rhoda and Fred London, Inna, David, Sam, Jack and Jonah

Kathi and Eliot Mag and Family

Ellen Sue Moses and Mark A. Gould

Helene Rosenblatt

Sallyanne and Barry Scott and Family

Karen and Gerry Waltman and Family

# TBT sends press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kathi Mag  
EMAIL ADDRESS: [kathimag625@gmail.com](mailto:kathimag625@gmail.com)  
Telephone: (860)563-0714

## TEMPLE BETH TORAH TO CELEBRATE SUKKOT WITH DINNER, SERVICE

Temple Beth Torah, 130 Main Street, Old Wethersfield, will celebrate the Jewish holiday of Sukkot on Friday, September 28 at 6:30 p.m. The evening will begin with a short Shabbat service (held outdoors, weather permitting) followed by a dairy/vegetarian potluck dinner.

Sukkot is a harvest holiday commemorating when Israelites dwelled in sukkot (makeshift huts) during their forty years of wandering in the desert before arriving in the Promised Land. Later, Sukkot served a new purpose - providing temporary sleeping quarters for Jewish farming communities as they gathered in the fall harvest.

“Eventually a holiday - Sukkot - developed around this second tradition. On that holiday our ancestors would give thanks for all the fruits of the land, as Jews today continue to do each Sukkot”, Rabbi Seth Riemer explained

“This is one of my favorite Temple Beth Torah events. I like how our sukkah (hut) hearkens back to the days of our ancestors, and I enjoy having services in full view of nature,” Carol Gershenson, a member of Temple Beth Torah’s executive committee, said. “The dinner is a nice way to catch up with friends as well as spend time with people who are new to the congregation.”

Temple Beth Torah is an unaffiliated, egalitarian synagogue in the heart of Old Wethersfield. In addition to services on Friday evenings, the synagogue holds monthly Torah study, holiday celebrations and runs a religious school.

While the Sukkot event is free, RSVPs are requested to coordinate the potluck dinner. Contact: Kathi Mag, [kathimag625@gmail.com](mailto:kathimag625@gmail.com), (860)563-0714. Learn more about Temple Beth Torah Wethersfield at our website, [www.templebethtorahwethersfield.org/](http://www.templebethtorahwethersfield.org/).

###



## **They're back...**

Barry and Mira Schein have left New York City and moved to an apartment in West Hartford. Mira said she would welcome calls. 860 368 9299 or 860 372 8406.

# TWO WAYS YOU CAN DONATE TO TBT

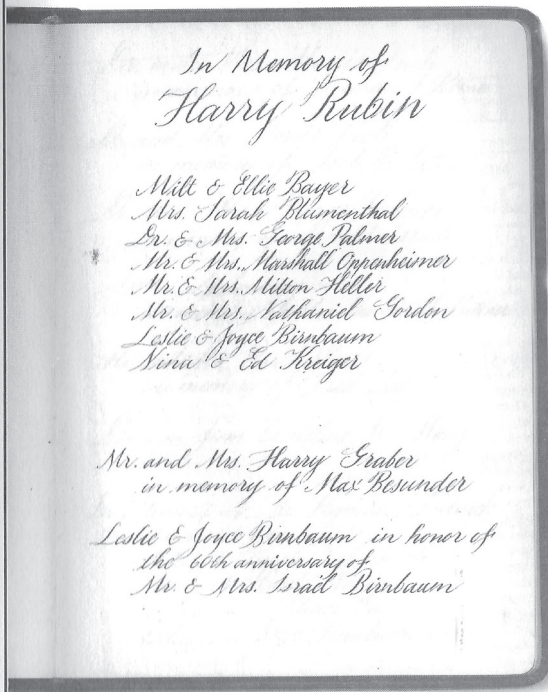
## GOLDEN BOOK

A general all-purpose fund for ongoing repairs and maintenance.

## TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life is on the west wall of the Social Hall. Family members friends can make dedications or remembrances, ranging from individual leaves to branches.

This is a page from our 50th anniversary souvenir program. The sentiments remain the same although there no longer is a Felicia Fund.



The Tree of Life represents the Torah and the Jewish people. The imagery: The tree is situated on a hill. Leaves are larger than life to permit inscriptions. At the top of each branch are three special leaves that represent the composition of the Jewish people...the Kohanim, the Levites and the Israelites. Branches are inter-locked symbolizing unity and form a seven-branched menorah which symbolizes the days of the week. The seven roots of the tree trace Jewish origins representing the three patriarchs and four matriarchs of Israel - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel.

Members, loved ones and friends of Temple Beth Torah are afforded several options to make donations in celebration of a simcha, in memory of a loved one or in honor or recognition of an individual or memorable event. The Tree of Life, located in our vestry, provides a range of dedication and remembrance opportunities, ranging from individual leaves to branches.

In addition, individuals may donate a Siddur, and a suitably inscribed book-plate will be placed in the prayer book in recognition of the donation. The TBT Golden Book is an all-purpose fund set up to accept donations to the synagogue for any purpose. Finally, the Felicia B. Shpall Memorial Fund has been established to accept donations in memory of our beloved spiritual leader; funds collected will be used to provide a permanent memorial, or memorials.

# TBT OFFICERS 2018-2019

Rabbi Seth Riemer

Executive Committee:

Treasurer: Barry Goldberg

Recording Secretary: Carol Gershenson

Corresponding Secretary: Kathi Mag

Financial Secretary: Sallyanne Scott

Publicity and Friday night announcements: Deb Ehrlich

Membership Chair: Eliot Mag

Head Instructor: Rabbi Seth Riemer

Religious Studies Instructor: Michele Cyr

Board of Education and Adult Education: Cecile Bronfin

Memorial Park: Barry Goldberg

Building Chair: Gary Evans

Building Committee: Dave Forrest and Kathi Mag

Gardening: Kathi Mag

The Star: Phil Lohman and Micki Bellamy

Deb Hammer: Torah Study, Building Rental, Webmaster

Ways and Means Chair: Judy Gold

Ways and Means Committee: Rhoda London and Helene Rosenblatt

Receiving phone calls: Rhoda London

Kol Nidre Appeal: Barry Bronfin

Kathi Mag: conduct board meetings

Trustee: Susan James

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

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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Glastonbury, CT 06033