



# THE STAR

**NEWSLETTER**

ELUL / TISHREI / CHESHVAN 5780

September / October 2019

VOL. 22 NO. 4

TEMPLE BETH TORAH, 130 MAIN STREET  
WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

# Yamim Nora'im / High Holidays Message from Rabbi Seth Riemer

*A word of caution: I am stepping into sensitive territory but feel compelled to follow my conscience. Readers who oppose raising political topics at synagogue might prefer not to read what follows. I acknowledge the fact that views on this subject differ, and I respect all of you.*

**T**he year now ending has been an especially tumultuous and tragic one. Among its most disturbing elements are these two: the looming prospect of global catastrophe triggered by surging climate change; and the threat of government-sponsored ethnic intolerance reflected in, for instance, racially charged immigration policy. The poisonous political climate and dreadful ecological upheaval have worked in tandem to drag the world down and contributed to the same toxic environment in which all of us live. Are these frightening topics, ones easily exploited for partisan purposes, even suitable for discussion in a religious setting?

Synagogue-goers often want to shy away from politics even though it has always been a strong Jewish concern—going back to Abraham's military intervention against warmongering kings, Moses's spearheading

of a revolutionary human rights movement, and Biblical prophets' impassioned protests against corrupt, unjust rulers. To admit our painful circumstances is not necessarily or automatically to fall into one ideological camp or another. The issue of how to confront without adding to the toxicity polluting our world is, of course, a thorny one, but I would be abandoning my professional responsibility (as a rabbi) and religious values (as a Jew) if I ignored that subject entirely.

I realize that you might not want me to bring up this subject. Even so, and especially in light of those rising temperatures we can do something about, I'm prepared (pun intended) to take the heat if you disagree with what I'm saying. If you know me, you know I'm alarmed both by what's happening (environmental and human degradation) and by what's not happening (governmental inaction and paralysis instead of endeavor and progress). You, along with me, must face facts: if we stick our heads in the sand, we'll only end up stuck—and powerless. We need not focus always on the political, but we ignore it at our peril. We are living in a toxic environment:

The planet is heating up; the oceans are ominously rising. We do see children torn from their parents, and “wretched” folk turned away in the shadow of “Mother of Exiles”—as Emma Lazarus called the Statue of Liberty—who pleads in vain for a compassionate immigration policy toward these “homeless” “huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” We as Jews, as Americans, as rational people, cannot avert our glance from the strategy of division and distraction—we’ve seen it before! The toxicity feeding these sad but true narratives is virulent and in the long run good for no one (not even those profiting off it at the moment). A passive response to today’s urgent challenge certainly doesn’t fit with how we as Jews need to live. I do not have a solution (or so-called “magic bullet”) for any of the problems facing us as Jews, Americans and global citizens, but I can offer some reassurance. We have the life-affirming wisdom of our Torah tradition; we have the U.S. Constitution; and we have science. These three things, working in coordination, can be of help.

Together, they provide a set of axioms or working rules with which to approach our dangerous predicament and guide us out of that venomous swamp where we find ourselves mired. The sensibility that drives our conduct—thus, to promote healing of division, welcoming of strangers and pres-

ervation of life—should reflect a combined wisdom, one of Jewish ethical teaching, American civil jurisprudence and reason-based analysis. One fact that resonates in all three of those realms of wisdom is the public’s growing sense of impatience and frustration with religious business as usual in relation to the gun violence epidemic that happens to square with white supremacist, anti-immigrant (and, not so incidentally, antisemitic) sentiment. For public officials, including clergy such as myself, to go on offering “moments of silence” for “thoughts and prayers” and doing nothing else as the atrocities mount not only serves no purpose but is counterproductive in that it lulls us into a temporary and false sense of security and allows us to substitute pious utterances for meaningful changes in law and policy.

I’ll be honored to lead you in prayer during TBT’s beautiful holiday services, and I hope that we’ll find meaning, comfort and satisfaction in our worship. Even so, my hope and intention are for our prayers to serve as both an incitement to deep reflection in the spirit of teshuvah / reflection upon our genuine human priorities and as a call to action.

To you and all your loved ones, I offer my loving wishes for a shanah tovah!

# Message from Your Executive Committee

Hello TBT Family,

Can you believe it, summer is winding down fast and fall is just around the corner? School has started for our children and Rosh Hashanah arrives at the end of September with Yom Kippur right behind!

Over the summer, we have been very busy getting the front of TBT scraped, primed and painted. The beautification of our lovely building has begun! We plan on having multiple fund-raisers to help with the continuation of this project.

Our first Friday night Shabbat service is September 6th at 7:00pm. We look forward to seeing all of our TBT family! Sallyanne and Barry Scott will host the oneg.

Religious school begins on Sunday, September 8th at 9:00. Michelle Cyr will again be our teacher for the younger students and Rabbi Seth will continue with the teaching of Hebrew.

Judy Gold, Karen Klein, Kathryn Kenzel, and Sallyanne Scott got together over the summer to plan Game Night, which will take place on Thursday, September 19th from 6:30-9:30. A donation of \$18 will get you in the door. We will also have a 50/50 raffle as well.

Please encourage all your friends to attend. It is a night packed with fun, games and great desserts!

Old favorites like the Sukkot Pot Luck will be back on Friday, October 20th, with Shabbat Services at 6:00pm, immediately followed by our wonderful Sukkot Pot Luck Dinner.

On Sunday, October 7th at 5:00pm, we celebrate Simchat Torah. Our Chanukah Party is scheduled for Sunday December 15th from 11:00-1:00. Please mark your calendars for all of these events!

Remember, for any of our TBT events to be successful, we need YOUR participation. Whether it is time or money, your support is needed so we are able to continue to offer a variety of events to all of our members.

As you know, TBT is known for our wonderful Shabbat Onegs. Included in this issue, is the Fall Oneg Host Calendar. Please check to see which date you will be hosting the Oneg. If you cannot fulfill your hosting duties, please find a substitute or switch with a friend.

We look forward to seeing all of you at our first Shabbat service on Friday, September 6th. Please stop by and say Shalom!

## *Social Hall's Aged AC replaced with snazzy new AC/Heater unit*

In an old building with little insulation and a quirky electrical system, climate control is a challenge! A stretch of humid days in the 90s mid-summer was just too much for our 2 working AC units in the social hall to handle. **Jonathan Reuben**, TBT member and President of the Always on Sunday (AOS) International Folk Dance group (weekly renters at TBT), proposed a solution. AOS generously offered to contribute half of the cost for a new AC unit to replace our 3rd failing unit in the hall. The team of **Ralph and Deb** quickly assessed what was needed, shopped out an energy efficient new unit, and oversaw the delivery and installation. Voila! Now all of our renters are keeping cool, and we will enjoy the comfort when we return for services after Labor Day. As an added bonus, this new unit converts to a heater and will help supplement our furnace when it once again turns to winter weather (shudder!). Thanks again to AOS for their ongoing support and generosity!



# WE WERE PAINTED!

(well, what can be seen from the street anyway.)



Special thanks to **Dave Forrest** for organizing the scraping/painting of the front and front side of TBT.

And kudos to **Dominic**, the painter, for hanging in there despite weather delays and also for repairing the woodwork on the tower.



**Temple Beth Torah invites you to**



**Save the date! Thursday, September 19, 2019 from 6:30-9:30 PM**

Temple Beth Torah 130 Main Street Wethersfield CT 0610

Come play Scrabble, Rummy Q, cards, Mah Jongg, Monopoly, Scrabble, whatever! (Bring your own games if you like!)

Bring your friends, colleagues, co-workers, family members, anyone you meet on the street!

Please let us know how many are in your party, and if you prefer a particular game, so we can match you up!

**A great time will be had by all!**

RSVP by 9/12 to Sallyanne Scott 860-828-3377  
or [batsps53@gmail.com](mailto:batsps53@gmail.com).

Please make check out to Temple Beth Torah and mail to:

Sallyanne Scott  
105 Sunmeadow Drive East Berlin, CT 06023



# ONEG HOST SCHEDULE September - December 2019

September 6 Sallanne and Barry Scott  
September 13 Debbie Ehrlich  
September 20 Elisha and Eric Rose  
September 27 Ellen Sue Moses and Mark Gould  
October 4 Kathi and Eliot Mag  
October 11 Tracey and Moshe Sondik  
October 18 Sukkot Pot Luck Supper  
October 25 Carol Gershenson  
November 16 Gary and Sarah Evans  
November 8 Jeremy and Julie Weiss  
November 15 Helene Rosenblatt  
November 22 Thanksgiving Break, no services  
November 29 Heather and Darryl Latorra  
December 6 Fred and Susan Cohan  
December 13 Michelle Cyr  
December 20 Deb and Joe Hammer  
December 27 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/brownies, fruit, soda, seltzer, cider, etc. or whatever else you feel like sharing. Tablecloths are in the kitchen, upper cabinets across from the stove. 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 and right of the sink, you will find napkins, dessert plates, plastic cutlery and hot and cold drink cups. We also have small wine/juice cups above the dish rack. Just before services are over, count heads and pour the juice. Keep in mind that we don't usually get huge crowds on a typical Friday night, so plan for about 15 people. Thanks for cleaning up when you are done!

# Ben-Kiki Bar Mitzvah

*Presented to*

*Cooper  
David  
Ben-Kiki*

*by the members of  
Temple Beth Torah  
Wethersfield,  
celebrating  
his becoming  
a Bar Mitzvah*

*19th of Sivan, 5779  
June 22, 2019*



On June 22 the bar mitzvah of Cooper Ben-Kiki, son of Jay Ben-Kiki and Amy Heileman, was celebrated during a Shabbat minhah/afternoon service at TBT. Cooper, in the presence of family and friends, helped Rabbi Seth lead the service and presented a thoughtful devar torah on the subject of religious faith and human choices. Cooper is the second Ben-Kiki, after his brother Chase, to have marked his coming of age with a bar mitzvah service at our synagogue.

.....

Sallyanne is exploring a GO FUND ME campaign to help with our building restoration.



# Donations

## **TBT Emergency Building Repairs Fund:**

Micki and Dennis Bellamy  
Ruth Brainin and Janis Monat  
Alice Burstein  
Mara Dresner  
Debra and Joe Hammer  
Karen and Bob Klein  
Kathi and Eliot Mag  
Sarah Michaels

Ellen Sue Moses and Mark Gould  
Harriet Rosen  
Helene Rosenblatt  
Barbara and Hugh Smolin  
Barbara and Steven Weiss  
Julie and Jeremy Weiss  
Gloria and Stan Zwirn  
Judy and Marty Gold

## **In Memory of Marlene Ellenberg:**

Debra L. Ellenberg-Gray  
Linda and James LaMore  
James A. McDonald  
Sallyanne and Barry Scott

## **In Honor of the Births of Karen and Bob Klein's Granddaughters:**

Audrey Goldman & Molly Kruger  
Sallyanne and Barry Scott

## **Celebrating Rita Nevins' Successful Eye Surgery:**

Kathi and Eliot Mag

## **Mazel Tov to Kathryn Kenzel on her Conversion:**

Mara Dresner  
Kathi and Eliot Mag  
Sallyanne and Barry Scott

## **In Memory of Bernice Veroff:**

Eliot and Kathi Mag

# Adon Olam examined - Micki Bellamy

Our Friday evening services at Temple Beth Torah often conclude with the singing of Adon Olam, a short liturgical poem composed of five rhyming couplets. Authorship of the poem is lost to history, but Adon Olam has been included in siddurim since the 14th century. Its strict meter and rhyme make it easy to sing (even for those of us who are melodiously challenged); Rabbi Seth has written a particularly lovely tune for Adon Olam, that perfectly captures the poem's warmth and majesty.

We recognize the opening words – *Adon* “Lord,” as in Adonai, and *olam*, familiar to us from the blessing *Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam* – which we translate “Blessed are You Adonai, our God, King of the universe.” However, in the context of this poem, a truer translation for *olam* is “eternity” – “Lord of Eternity.”

In the post-biblical Hebrew of the rabbis, the meaning of *olam* had drifted from its earlier nuance of time, to encompass a more physical meaning of “world,” or “universe.” But here the poet has returned to the temporal sense of *olam*, reflecting on the God who was, and is, and will be; who reigned before creation, and will rule even when all things have ceased to be.

Echoing the Shema, the poet extols the oneness of God – *v'hu echad, v'ein sheni*, “And He is One, there is no second.” A transcendent oneness that exceeds our worldly human experience – *B'li rei-sheet, b'li takhleet*, He is “Without beginning, without end.”

God is majestic and all-powerful; *norah*, “awesome,” nay “fearsome!” And yet, the poet reassures us, we have an intimate connection with this cosmic deity. The word “my” in Hebrew is a single syllable attached to a noun, an *ee* sound; listen for its repetition beginning in the fourth verse: *v'hu e-li*, “And He is my God” – *v'chai go'ali*, “and my everliving redeemer” – *v'tzur chevli*, “and the rock of my sorrow” – *nisi u-manos li*, “my banner and my refuge” – *m'nat kosi b'yomekra*, “the portion of my cup on the day I call” – *B'yado afkid ruchi*, “Into His hand I entrust my spirit.” This tender image of God holding our spirits in His hand for safekeeping while we sleep, likely led to the practice of reciting Adon Olam before going to bed at night; Adonai is with us, we need not fear.

# אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם

## **Adon Olam**

*Translation by Israel Zangwill*

Lord of the world, He reigned alone  
While yet the universe was naught,  
When by His will all things were wrought,  
Then first His sovran name was known.

And when the All shall cease to be,  
In dread lone splendor He shall reign.  
He was, He is, He shall remain  
In glorious eternity.

For He is One, no second shares  
His nature or His loneliness;  
Upending and beginningless,  
All strength is His, all sway He bears.

He is the living God to save,  
My Rock while sorrow's toils endure,  
My banner and my stronghold sure,  
The cup of life whene'er I crave.

I place my soul within His palm  
Before I sleep as when I wake,  
And though my body I forsake,  
Rest in the LORD in fearless calm.

***Ailanthus altissima***, commonly known as tree of heaven, ailanthus, varnish tree, or in Chinese as chouchun (Chinese: 臭椿; pinyin: chòuchūn; literally: 'foul smelling tree'), is a deciduous tree in the family Simaroubaceae. It is native to both northeast and central China, as well as Taiwan. Unlike other members of the genus *Ailanthus*, it is found in temperate climates rather than the tropics. The tree grows rapidly and is capable of reaching heights of 15 metres (49 ft) in 25 years. While the species rarely live more than 50 years, some specimens exceed 100 years old.[4] Its remarkable suckering ability makes it possible for this tree to clone itself almost indefinitely. It is considered a noxious weed and vigorous invasive species.

In China, the tree of heaven has a long and rich history. It was mentioned in the oldest extant Chinese dictionary and listed in many Chinese medical texts for its purported curative ability. The roots, leaves and bark are used in traditional Chinese medicine, primarily as an astringent. The tree has been grown extensively both in China and abroad as a host plant for the ailanthus silkmoth, a moth involved in silk production. *Ailanthus* has become a part of western culture as well, with the tree serving as the central metaphor and subject matter of the

best-selling American novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith. The tree was first brought from China to Europe in the 1740s and to the United States in 1784. It was one of the first trees brought west during a time when chinoiserie was dominating European arts, and was initially hailed as a beautiful garden specimen. However, enthusiasm soon waned after gardeners became familiar with its suckering habits and its foul smelling odor. Despite this, it was used extensively as a street tree during much of the 19th century. Outside Europe and the United States the plant has been spread to many other areas beyond its native range. In a number of these, it has become an invasive species due to its ability both to colonize disturbed areas quickly and to suppress competition by allelopathy which refers to the chemical inhibition of one species by another. The "inhibitory" chemical is released into the environment where it affects the development and growth of neighboring plants.. It is considered a noxious weed in Australia, the United States, New Zealand and many countries of central, eastern and southern Europe. The tree also resprouts vigorously when cut, making its eradication difficult and time-consuming. In many urban areas, it has acquired the derisive nicknames of "ghetto palm", "stink tree", and "tree of Hell".



## Gardening Opportunity

TBT's *Tree of Heaven* grove  
calls out to be replaced with  
a wild flower garden...  
Southern exposure...  
Water faucet right there...

*Anybody?*

# US

**Rabbi:** Seth Riemer

**Co-Presidents:** Sallyanne Scott and Kathi Mag

**Executive Committee:** Sallyanne Scott, Kathi Mag,  
Carol Gershenson, Barry Goldberg and Karen Klein

**Financial Secretary, Lead Person for board meetings:**  
Sallyanne Scott

**Corresponding Secretary for Donations,**

**Co-President, Gardening:** Kathi Mag

**Recording Secretary:** Carol Gershenson

**Membership and Publicity Chairperson:** Karen Klein

**Treasurer and Memorial Park Director:** Barry Goldberg

**Nominating Chair and Board of Education**

**Chairperson:** Cecile Bronfin

**High Holidays Committee:** Rabbi Seth Riemer, Barbara Checknoff,  
Cecile Bronfin, Fred London, Carol Gershenson,

Susan Reuben, Sallyanne and Barry Scott, Kathi and Eliot Mag

**Friday Night Announcements:** Deb Ehrlich

**Head Religious School Instructor:** Rabbi Seth Riemer

**Religious Studies Teacher:** Michelle Cyr

**Adult Education and Book Club:** Ellen Sue Moses

**Receiving phone calls:** Rhoda London

**The Star Newsletter:** Phil Lohman, Micki Bellamy, Deb Hammer

**Ways and Means:** Kathryn Kenzel

aided by Judy Gold and Helene Rosenblatt

**Building Chairperson:** Gary Evans

**Building Consultants:** Ralph Horowitz,

Dave Forrest, Phil Lohman, Kathi Mag

**Torah Study, Building Rentals, and Webmaster:** Deb Hammer



PAID ADVERTISEMENT

## 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**



411 Naubuc Avenue  
Glastonbury, CT 06033

# Great Season for Hydrangeas!

