

# THE STAR

**NEWSLETTER**

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TEMPLE BETH TORAH, 130 MAIN STREET  
WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

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# Important message from Rabbi Seth

Dear Members of TBT,

I have two very personal messages to relate. First, I'm writing to express my strong, heartfelt thanks to you, Sallyanne and Kathi, for your years of devoted service as leaders of our congregation. Without the two of you to give your steady, unceasing, patient and cheerful devotion to TBT, it would have been unsustainable. You have truly kept the ner tamid, eternal flame, of Jewish community and commitment alive and bright in our midst. You have encouraged, sustained and inspired me. I pray that your wish for new leadership to step up will fall on responsive ears!

The other message has to do with my own plans. They will come as no surprise to those of you aware of my strong Zionist commitment and longtime desire to make aliyah—my feeling drawn to the land, people and culture of Israel; the urge I feel to move there. I have been wrestling with this wish for most of my life. I discussed it with my rabbi at around the time of my bar mitzvah. I kept coming back to it. Certainly, over the last few decades, ever since, 30 years ago as a rabbinical student, I took my family with me on a first trip to Israel, my yearning to be Israeli has only grown stronger. The decision came gradually. A steady undercurrent of eagerness and enthusiasm (almost like an ache) kept growing in intensity, tapping at my soul and prodding my mind until I could no longer resist the call. So, I've decided at last to heed that call.

I intend to make the move in the summer of 2021.

Among several powerful considerations that made me hesitate, slowing down the decision I finally did make, is my relationship with you, the people of TBT. I have loved my 12 years serving as your rabbi and look forward to the 13th, which, with God's help, should include—as be-

fore but perhaps with our recent virtual (Zoom) twist—holiday celebrations, Shabbat services, Torah study and beney mitzvah events. You are the best of the best. I am profoundly grateful to you. However, I know that, much as I'll regret leaving TBT, I would regret even more not fulfilling my dream of aliyah.

For the year ahead I am hoping to work with our synagogue board led by Sallyanne and Kathi and with all of you to help TBT figure out a plan. Big decisions are on the horizon. They include: transition to new lay and rabbinic leadership; and devising and implementing an interim (and perhaps longer-term) strategy for synagogue activity (worship services, Torah study, Sunday school, holiday celebration, fundraising) and viability (thus, attracting new and younger members) in this time of unprecedented social, economic and technological upheaval. Prior to those concerns, though, is another more pressing one; ultimately, all of you need to come together and make a decision of your own: what do you want TBT's future to be?

No matter what you decide, please know that I will have you in my heart and—even from across an ocean and a couple of continents—will be just a text message or Zoom or Skype connection away. I don't want to get in the way of your decision-making and plans, but, to the extent that I can stay connected with you personally and communally and without interfering, I will always be at your service.

I anticipate that some of you will have questions for me. If you do, please don't hesitate to be in touch (by email: [olamhaba18@gmail.com](mailto:olamhaba18@gmail.com); by phone: 860-918-0213).

With much affection,

Rabbi Seth

# Important message from Sallyanne and Kathi

Dear TBT Family,

I am writing to all of you to let you that Kathi Mag and I intend to retire as Co-Presidents of Temple Beth Torah next year at the end of June, 2021. We have loved this job and the fabulous people we worked with for the past eleven years. We both love TBT and have done everything in our power to keep it a viable part of all of our lives. It is now time for new Executive leadership. We certainly hope that someone will step up and fill our shoes and carry TBT into the future.

We have loved working with our wonderful board and all of our members who have given selflessly to keep TBT afloat. Amazingly, with the help of our “Angels”, dedicated members, and some divine guidance, we have made it through some really rough times.

We are here to help in any way we can to help find our replacements and will work to make the transition a smooth one.

Again, thanks so much for the privilege of allowing us to guide TBT for all of these years. We look forward to some rest and relaxation, to spend more time with family and grandkids, and just chill out in our retirement!

Most sincerely,

Sallyanne and Kathi

# So...What's Next?!

*2020 seems to be the year for big life changes and decisions. What will be next for the leadership and continuation of our TBT congregation? We are incredibly fortunate to have a full year with current leadership (both spiritual and organizational!) remaining in place to help guide us. We plan to hold an **Annual Meeting Kickoff on Thursday, June 25** to get the ball rolling. We will meet in the **back yard of TBT at 5:00 p.m.** when it's nice and shady. Please bring your own lawn chair and a beverage, if desired. We won't use the inside of the building and we will socially distance ourselves.*

***Rain date will be Tuesday, June 30**, same time. It is our hope that, in addition to the members of the TBT Board, other interested members of the congregation will come to participate. If you plan to attend, and we certainly hope you do, **please RSVP to [tbt.w.ct@gmail.com](mailto:tbt.w.ct@gmail.com)** and let us know, so that we will be able to advise you of any changes due to inclement weather.*

## **OUR RENTERS BEGIN TO RETURN...**

*For some time now, TBT has rented the Social Hall space to a variety of Fitness/Dance/Wellness groups. Prior to our mid-March CV-19 shutdown, these activities included yoga, Zumba, Qigong, and international folk dance. As Connecticut enters a new Phase of reopening for such groups, we welcome the thoughtful and careful return of our valued renters. We also welcome back a former renter who will be instructing in traditional Wing Chun Kung Fu. All CT state guidelines and protocols for health and safety will be followed by our conscientious renters. The income generated by renting the Social Hall space is critical to our budget, and we are pleased to be able to bring our renter groups back!*

# And another earlier message from Rabbi Seth...

## This one on Virt-Shul Reality

The last few months have brought our TBT community together as never before in my experience. Ironic, too, given that “social distancing” measures firmly in place have prevented us from being in the same room to worship, greet, shmooze, celebrate. This virtual shul (or “virt-shul”) reality has presented challenges, to be sure, but it has also had some surprising positive effects. The last few months have brought our TBT community together as never before in my experience. Ironic, too, given that “social distancing” measures firmly in place have prevented us from being in the same room to worship, greet, shmooze, celebrate. This virtual shul (or “virt-shul”) reality has presented challenges, to be sure, but it has also had some surprising positive effects.

Notable among them is the fact that our Shabbat service and Torah study attendance has increased. Also, with the benefit of Zoom as our online communication platform, synagogue members, relatives and friends in places as far away as Florida and Wisconsin have been able to join us and count in the minyan. (Those who don't have access to the internet hooked up with the group by phone.) I also used Zoom to lead a Pesah seder, whose participants included my daughter and her boyfriend

in Boston, my son and his girlfriend in Georgia, and relatives in Canada. More recently, we were invited to join in an event sponsored by our friends in the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, and I was honored to be asked to speak, along with several others, some of them distinguished public figures, including Senator Blumenthal.

During that virtual gathering he made the astute, sensitive observation that “social distancing” is not the right term for what we're supposed to be doing. He emphasized (and here I'm paraphrasing what I recollect his having said) that we are engaged in physical distancing for the sake of affirming and strengthening our social connection and human commitment. I find that, despite the occasional loneliness and cooped up feeling, I am able—through phone conversations, emails, Zoom and Skype activities—to stay engaged with family, friends and community as much as if not more than ever.

Even in its virt-shul form, TBT continues to make Jewish tradition and practice available to us. As the end-of-June conclusion of our regular yearly synagogue schedule approaches, and through the summer, I will be watching for your emails

and listening for your calls. Let's stay in (virtual) touch. Perhaps we'll have the good fortune to be able to return, sooner rather than later, to a semblance of normalcy in our daily life, but in one form or another, whether in person or across a telephone line or computer screen, we can keep being here for each other.

Wishing you good health and strength for the time ahead. Stay safe!  
Shalom from—

Rabbi Seth



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## And... Rabbi Seth reflects on that recent Ahmadiyya event...

The question, I think, is how to experience prayer during this time of pandemic. Brothers and sisters, prayer is essential to this moment for prayer is about acknowledging closeness in distance. Think for just a moment about our material existence. Then think about God's non-physical nature and how it finds an echo, a beautiful resemblance, in the human soul. Look at each and all of us now—what a miracle! Here we are set apart from each other in different spaces. Each of us, a sort of disembodied spirit, like an angel, to the next person so inaccessible, so beyond reach we are to one another's touch—to a hand's grasp and arms' hug—yet somehow present. Prophets of all religions contemplate that riddle: the vast distance between us as mortal beings and a higher, deeper reality for which we reach and search, yet in that gap between seeking and finding God, we know God is with us. God is further away than the most distant star and as close to us as the beating of our hearts. So too we can be to one another. The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber talked about how I communicate with Thou ("thou" "meaning "you" in a singular, personal, intimate

sense); he likened the I-Thou interaction to experiencing God's presence. If, Buber reflected, I recognize, in my approach toward you, that I will never know you fully, that what makes you yourself (your "thou"ness) is truly beyond my reach, infinitely, unfathomably unique, then encountering holiness in dialogue with another human soul is possible. Each of us can be to the other a reminder of the Divine Mystery. As we learn from our shared and distinct holy traditions, each of us human beings is indeed a tzelem elohim, a spark of God's essential nature. Gazing on you from afar, through this virtual landscape, via social distancing, allows that realization to confidently materialize. This is prayer in its most purely humanly interactive sense. In this moment we are "walking," as the Biblical psalm expresses, through *gey tzalmavet*, a "valley of the shadow of death," but "thou (God) art with me." Each of you, sisters and brothers, is with me, and I am with each of you, and all of us are together in God's intangible yet real embrace, so we "shall fear no evil," and we'll keep hoping and praying...

# Donations

In loving memory of her mother,

**Janice Rosenblatt**

by Helene Rosenblatt

In loving memory of Fred's  
college roommate and lifelong friend,

**Richard Bromberg**

by Fred and Rhoda London

**Dave Forrest and Ron Demaine replaced  
TBT side door and disposed of the debris that  
remained. Great improvement!**

**Nice job Guys!**



Our neighbors, the Powers, planted the driveway divider...**Gorgeous!**  
Scraggly old trees gone.



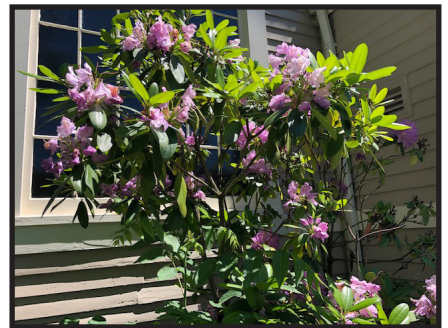
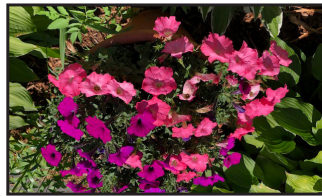
# A snapshot visit around TBT.



Andersen's Farm



Andersen's Tomatoes



Rhododendrons



Honeysuckle

# TEMPLE BETH TORAH WETHERSFIELD CONNECTICUT 2020 HONEY FUNDRAISER



This 8-ounce jar of delicious kosher honey arrives in time for the Rosh Hashanah holiday, decorated with a colorful label, and includes a personalized card reading “L’Shana Tova—Wishing you a Healthy and Happy New Year.” This card also lets the recipients know that a donation has been made in their honor to **Temple Beth Torah**.

Your cost is **\$12.00 per jar** which includes shipping and handling within the United States. We will gladly mail orders outside the United States for an additional fee. To order honey go to [TBT Honey Store \(https://orthoney.com/BTW\)](https://orthoney.com/BTW), and follow the step-by-step instructions. This is now a secured site. Major credit cards are accepted for payment.

Order by **July 22, 2020** to avoid a \$5.00 per jar shipping fee.

What better way to wish family, friends and business associates a “Sweet and Healthy New Year” than sending a jar of honey?

For more information please contact:

**Judy Gold 860-521-0334 goldjrg88@gmail.com**

# MAUREEN HOROWITZ

ABR, GRI, SRES, REALTOR

Licensed in Connecticut since 2002



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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

# 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 Consultants:** Ralph Horowitz, Dave Forrest,  
Phil Lohman, Kathi Mag and Gary Evans

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



Blast from the past...  
Temple dedication

