



THE STAR

Autumn Issue

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November / December 2021

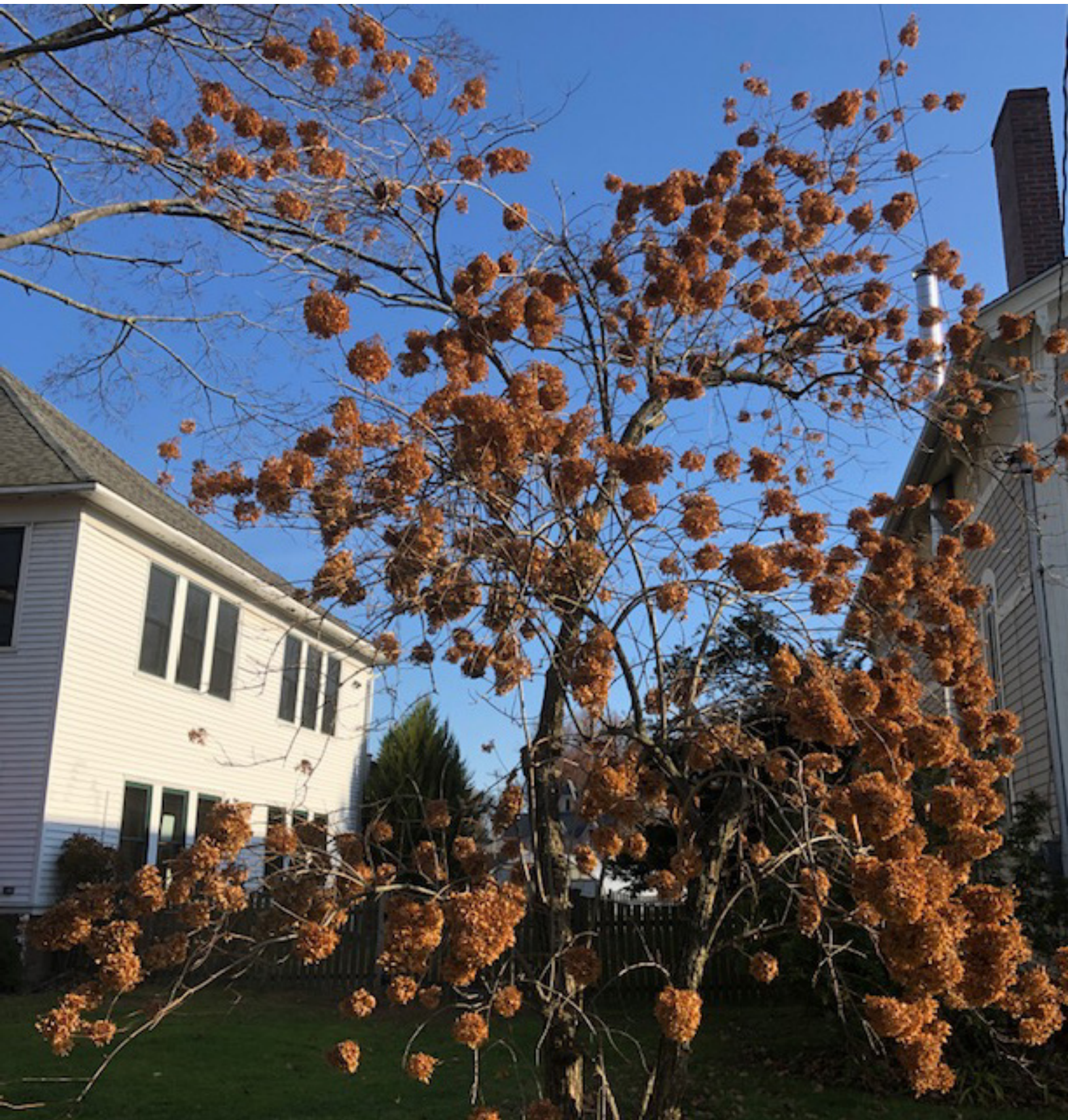
CHESHVAN / KISLEV / TEVET 5782

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**TEMPLE BETH TORAH, 130 MAIN STREET
WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT**



Side alley color...



Hydrangea blossoms needing deadheading...

Contents

- **Message from Rabbi Alan**
- **Messages from the Co-Presidents**
- **News and Notes**
- **Donations again**
- **Paid Advertisement**

■ The Rabbi's Word

WHAT WERE THE MACCABEES FIGHTING FOR?

It is ironic that Hanukkah is so widely observed in America, because it is not clear if Jews of today would side with the Maccabees. The Jews did not battle the Greeks for political independence and Hanukkah cannot be recast as an early-day version of Israel against the Arabs. Hanukkah commemorates a religious war.

The Greeks thought that they were benevolent rulers bringing civilization and progress to what and wherever they conquered. They presumed themselves to be ecumenical and tolerant, as they were creating a pantheon of gods into which they accepted the deities of all their subjects. Their only demand of the conquered population was assimilation and acculturation, that there should be a blending into the melting pot of Greek civilization and religion.

The Jewish community was divided in response to this appeal. Some believed that assimilation was a positive and modernizing influence and welcomed the release from Jewish parochialism. There was a small group, (some would say 'freedom fighters,' others 'terrorists') led by Judah Maccabee, who was opposed to the Greek assumption and ideal, and was prepared to fight and die to preserve the exclusive worship of Judaism. (The name Maccabee is an acronym for the Torah verse: ("Who is like You amongst the gods, Almighty.")

This was not a war for abstract principles of religious tolerance, it was a battle against ecumenicism fought by people to whom Torah was their life and breath. This was a culture war. Would we have stood with the Maccabees, or would we too have thought that assimilation was the path of the future? Would we fight for Judaism today, prepared to die to learn Torah and to keep Shabbat? Would the Torah ideal of "Honoring all things Holy" remain our standard?

Today we face a crisis of identity as serious as the one confronted 2,500 years ago. Will we survive this century as a religious community or merely as a flavor in the American melting pot? Hanukkah calls to us to combat assimilation and to fight for our heritage.

WHAT DOES CHANUKAH MEAN, AND HOW DO WE SPELL IT? EDUCATION=DEDICATION

The word Chanukah means "dedication." The word Chanukah comes from the Hebrew word "chinuch" which means "education." Is it any wonder that Jews have a full commitment and dedication to education and learning? With our dedication to learning, I remain puzzled as to why so many people are reluctant to learn and are even repulsed by studying history. So many tell me that history is boring, or there is too much information and facts to remember. Others tell me that they are just not interested. The sage Santayana once said that "One who forgets their past is condemned to repeat it" We, the Jewish people have a tremendously full history. Unfortunately, many of our people do not know what happened after the

return to the Promised Land following the death of Moses. We may, however, know a bit about the Babylonian exile through the destruction of the Temple by Rome. We then pick up our history in 1948 with the declaration of the state of Israel. It is ours to know, and well as ours to own.

By the way, we spell it: chet-nun-vav-kaf-hay!

The RITUAL of lighting the candles on the Menorah (Chanukiah), is the only thing we need to do; it is the only requirement of Chanukah.

Each night of Chanukah we light candles, starting with the Shamash (used to light the others) and one candle, and then adding one additional candle each night for a total of eight nights.

THE TRADITIONAL BLESSINGS OVER THE CANDLES:

- All nights: •

1. Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav, vetzivanu, lehadleek ner, shel Chanukah.

(Blessed are you, the Force that rules all of existence, who sanctifies us by giving us a way of life directed by holy commandments and commanded us to light the lights of Chanukah.)

2. Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avoteynu, bayamim hahem, bazman hazeh.

(Blessed are you, the Force that rules the universe, who made miracles for our ancestors, in those days, and makes the same possible for us in our own times.)

- Add on the first night only:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, shehechyanu, vekee-imanu, veheeg-yanu, lazman hazeh.

(Blessed are you, the Force that rules the universe, who has kept us in life, made us flourish, and made it possible for us to reach this happy occasion.)



■ Messages from our Co-Presidents

This from David Forrest

TBT continues to make improvements to your synagogue and its building.

More recently:

- The folding chairs have been removed from the sanctuary and found a resting place in the rear coat closet. This could be accomplished because the moldy ceiling and walls have been repaired. The ceiling and walls were done because the leaky roof was replaced. All in good order, Ken (yes)?
- The front foyer ceiling was replaced and the lighting improved.
- The yizkor board lights are now functional.
- For the safety of our congregation and the renters the emergency lighting system and fire extinguishers are now compliant with the fire code.
- Two lock boxes with passcode access (one on the front door and one on the side door) were added to allow for entry. The Wethersfield Fire and Police Departments were given the passcode as well.
- Weed removal and pruning are ongoing for all exterior areas.
- The restrooms facilities were upgraded.
- The sanctuary heating unit is again functional now that the blower sensor was replaced.

The board continues to hear your suggestions and will take action where appropriate.



Thanks to Dave Forrest for repairs to the coatroom and getting the folding chairs out of the sanctuary, as well as other improvements listed above!

Nasty mold and wall board were removed and ceiling painted.



This from Deb Hammer

Unbeknownst to Phil and Geraldene Lohman, the TBT crew plotted to surprise them with an afternoon appreciation celebration on Sunday, October 3rd, now known as “Phil Day.” Over many years, Phil had done so much for the continuation and betterment of TBT – it was high time we recognized that fact! Everyone loves Phil, and the turnout was fantastic! As far as Phil and Geraldene were concerned, they were simply attending a casual “last blast in the Sukkah” before we took it down for the season. When the two of them rounded the corner into the backyard of TBT, a spontaneous round of applause greeted them! Our surprise was a success! Smiles, laughter and kind words were shared. David made a little speech and Rabbi Alan declared Phil a blessing to TBT. Deb serenaded Phil with a song (lyrics below) and Sallyanne presented him with a framed version of the lyrics. We all enjoyed cider, apples, and cider donuts. It was just so great to be together for such a happy occasion – a rare treat in these COVID times. Thanks to Maureen for helping to set the plot in motion, to Judy for suggesting I write some lyrics and do a song, to Sallyanne for helping me set up, and to Gary for the sukkah!

*P.S. to Phil – don’t get too comfortable resting on your laurels.
There’s always something that needs to be done at 130 Main!*

*Sung to the melody of “Wedding Bell Blues” (with thanks and apologies to The 5th Dimension!)
new lyrics written by Debra Hammer dedicated to our dear friend, Phil Lohman, with love...*

Phil!

We love you so, we always will.

You do so many things that make us say, “Hooray!”

And we can always find you here on garbage day.

You are on our side, Phil, writing the Star News.

We can count on you, Phil, to stave off the scarecrow blues –

‘Tween Fiddler and Moses, it’s tough to choose!

We are crazy ‘bout Phil,

We love you so, we always will.

You are so dependable, whether night or day,

And every Hanukkah you truly light our way.

You’re the one who comes running, for so many building woes.

This old house has secrets that only Phil knows.

Your dedication almost glows!

We are crazy ‘bout Phil,

We love you so, we always will.

■ Phil Day Surprise!





Refreshments from Belltown Hill Orchards were set up in the sukkah.



Folks gathered around in a big circle..

Thanks to Sallyanne for framing Philtext!
Thanks to Maureen for the photos!



Mmmmmm cider....

■ Letter from Janet Levine (Rosenblatt)

Dear TBT Family,

November 12, 2021

I want to share a recent and pertinent experience. In Shul last Friday, I thought of my father Cy Levine. I often remember him especially while I'm sitting in Temple close to where he and my mother sat. My Mother, Lynn, and Cy (Dad to me) were among the founding members of this Temple in 1954. Some of you knew him. Some of you, like Phil and Harold, were good friends with him, and visited him well into his old age.

Some of you might have known that Dad liked to tell true stories. He was a good story teller, and the following story that came to me last Friday while singing familiar tunes and unfamiliar tunes but equally as enjoyable, was one he liked to tell because it had a life lesson built-in like an Aesop's Fable.

His story takes place during WWII in Civitavecchia, Italy. Dad is a medic and caring for wounded Soldiers during their transportation back home from the European Theater of Operations. One trip brings Dad to a once beautiful Italian port city called Civitavecchia. Germans have bombed, buildings are demolished, and there is a scarcity of medicine, food and supplies. A beggar asks for "alms for the poor." A nun nearby is asking for money to help rebuild her church. My father sees the beggar walk over to the nun and put coins into her basket. As Dad tells his story he approaches the beggar and asks, "why are you giving away what little money you have?" To which the old beggar replies, "I want to be part of something great."

I think of this story and remember how lucky and blessed I feel to have grown up in America without knowing Anti-Semitism, and with having extraordinary parents who had the energy, the know-how, the passion to buy and transform a Methodist Church into a surviving and thriving Jewish experience. Thank you Mom and Dad...for everything! Thank you all for carrying TBT along. And thank you Rabbi Alan for finding us. I too want us all to be part of something great.

Janet Levine

■ Some nice past Chanukah photos



Best Old Chanukah photo



■ Donations

Much appreciated so here they are again!

IN MEMORY OF BARRY SCHLEIN

- Marty & Judy Gold
- Bradley & Kathy Hoffman
- Eliot & Kathi Mag
- Harold & Rita Nevins
- Anna M. Rich
- Mira Schlein
- Barry and Sallyanne Scott
- Debra and Joe Hammer

IN MEMORY OF MENDAL SZLAMOWICZ, BROTHER IN LAW OF RABBI ALAN

- Eliot & Kathi Mag
- Debra and Joe Hammer

IN MEMORY OF STUART BECKERMAN

- Eliot & Kathi Mag
- Debra and Joe Hammer

IN MEMORY OF PATRICIA MAG

- Eliot & Kathi Mag

CEMETERY FUND

IN MEMORY OF HER PARENTS

(ROSE MICHAELS REVZON, STANTON REVZON,
RONALD MICHAELS)

- Sarah Louis Michaels
- Ira & Sally Henowitz
- Martin Keibel & Joan W. Feldman
- Sarah Michaels

US

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Recording Secretary: Carol Gershenson

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David Forrest, Harold Nevins, Fred London, Carol Gershenson,
Sallyanne Scott, Kathi Mag, Yoelit Hiebert, Ellen Sue Moses
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Adult Education and Book Club: Ellen Sue Moses

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Building Consultants: Dave Forrest, Phil Lohman,
Kathi Mag and Gary Evans

Torah Study, Building Rentals, and Webmaster: Deb Hammer

Rabbi Emeritus: Seth Riemer

Phil's Aralia returns for her annual wintering in the TBT kitchen.



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