



THE STAR

Midwinter Issue

February/March 2023

SH'VAT / ADAR 5783

VOL. 25 NO. 6

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

MARCH 2023 STAR

THE RABBI'S WORD!

*“The Lord said to Moses, why do you cry out to me? Tell the Children of Israel to go forward.”
(Exodus 14:15)*

As we turn the calendar to March; we enter the Hebrew month of Adar with Joy, as we first prepare for the joyous holiday of Purim and then the freedom-giving holiday of Passover and the spring season.

In preparing for these holidays, let us examine the various cultures throughout history that were strong at those particular times and who have made indelible contributions to the world. Let us take a key word that would summarize the essence of each culture.

Since we live in communities of diverse cultures, and religions today, it behooves us to begin to become aware and to understand our differences as well as our similarities.

For the ancient Greeks, the word was “beauty.” For the ancient Romans, the word was “power.”

Looking at Christian culture through much of history, the word would probably be “faith.”

Christianity still speaks of justification through faith, although there have been changes today, partially due to a return to the study of Hebrew sources in Christianity.

If we were to look at modern America, the key word would probably be “rights.”

We Americans place a strong emphasis on “rights” talk.

What about Judaism? There are several key words describing the essence of Judaism: one is “responsibility” and another is “action.”

1

Using “action,” ultimately, we humans are judged by our actions. When the Children of Israel received the Torah, they said, “We will hear, do and we will understand.” The doing comes before the understanding.

Action comes before faith. The Danish existential philosopher Kierkegaard spoke about his Christianity as a “leap of faith.” In response, the Jewish philosopher Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke of a “leap of action.”

Perhaps one of the best examples of this leap of action takes place when the Children of Israel were standing by the sea, pursued by the Egyptians. Moses stood their hands spread high praying, then God spoke to Moses. “Enough prayer, go forward already.”

There is a time for prayer and a time for action.

According to a famous Midrash, one of the leaders of the Children of Israel, Nachshon ben Aminadav plunged into the sea, taking one step at a time. When the water was up to his nostrils, the sea parted and the Children of Israel began to cross.

In our Purim story, Queen Esther took the action necessary to confront the king to ultimately save her people. One could not come to the king unless they were summoned. Those who disobeyed were put to death.

The Kabbala, the vast mystical tradition of Judaism, speaks of four worlds in which we humans live. The worlds are situated one inside another, like Russian nested dolls. What happens in the lower worlds affects what happens in the higher worlds. The lowest world is called Olam Ha-Asiya, literally The World of Action. It is the world most connected to the world of physical things, the material world in which we live.

2

We act in this physical world, doing certain things and avoiding doing other things. Ultimately, our actions, our behavior, affect everything else, including our emotions, our intellect, and our faith. That is why our tradition calls for a leap of action.

Sometimes we need to take a plunge, take that leap of action. It may be when we are standing by the sea and danger is pursuing us or when tragedy hits and we do not know what to do. Or it may be when we are confronted when the situation seems to be bigger than we are and we are afraid, or when something is being done contrary to our belief or that which is not being done with integrity or honesty. The World of Action is the first world in which we live our lives. This was the profound insight Judaism gave the world. The world still needs to hear the call to action today.

PURIM UPCOMING:

Taking a leap can also include something fun, like dressing up in costume for Purim. On the holiday of Purim, we dress up in costumes. At first glance, wearing costumes seems contrary to the concept of clothes as self-revelation. Doesn't wearing a costume seem to represent a false reflection of our inner identities?

The truth is that many people are already confused about who they really are; and in effect are wearing masks all year round. Therefore, on Purim, we drop our daily masks. The costumes we wear do not hide our true selves, but reveal an even deeper degree of self-image. This also explains why one imbibes on Purim; as another way to let down our defenses.

As the Talmud says; "When the wine goes in, the secret comes out!"

3

This year our synagogue will celebrate Purim on Sunday March 5 at 12:30-2:00 PM. We will begin with the Megillah reading followed by songs, and costume parade. As for our adults, let our adults play as well as our kids and be role models for the great joyousness of Purim.

US

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Co-Presidents words

Shalom TBT'ers,

Welcome back to the STAR with the Winter 2023 issue.

Thanks to Phil's improved health and spirit, he has graciously renewed his role as "creator/editor extraordinaire". Thanks, Phil.

Since the last STAR issue of September/October 2022, a number of noteworthy and not-so-noteworthy events have occurred. Let's start with the noteworthy.

Hannukah Party:

A celebration of the Festival of Lights was nicely attended. Food from Yosi Catering was more than enough and quite delicious, especially the latkes! Thanks to Rabbi Alan for leading us in song, to Yoelit for leading us in Jewish dances, to all of the wonderful story sharers, and to Joe R. for the array of photos. And, of course, these special events could not happen without the many helpers who made arrangements, set up the room, and helped to clean up after!

Tu B'Shevat Seder:

Our Tu B'Shevat Seder was held on Saturday, February 4th, and was simply charming! Participants were instructed to "be creative in choosing fruits/nuts to bring and share with the group." The result was astonishing! We enjoyed a variety of colorful and tasty fruits and nuts to celebrate the arrival of Spring in Israel. We sipped wine, sang songs, recited poetry, and celebrated nature together. We'll have pictures for the next edition of The Star!

Security Improvements:

At TBT, members of the TBT board met with the Town of Wethersfield Police Chief, the town's police Captain and the Secure Community Network liaison. Building security, building surveillance and the details of the national and local antisemitic activities were reviewed. We discussed short-term security steps that could be taken to ease the concerns that exist should 'bad actors' take aim at our synagogue. Further, an interior and exterior building tour was given.

The immediate recommendation was to have Ring doorbells installed at the front and social hall entrances. This was completed. TBT now has the ability to monitor those requiring access to the facility at times when religious services and/or other events are taking place. WPD was provided TBT's events calendar, the TBT floor plan and the lockbox code.

Further, TBT was encouraged by the steps taken by the WPD to continue with the employment of a Faith Based Officer. This position will be a positive step forward by having a contact and a resource accessible to Wethersfield's houses of worship who will evaluate local security risks.

The board is hopeful that these security measures will mitigate some of the member angst during functions.

Helping Hands Fund:

Our Helping Hands Fund was brought back on-line, to be available for those in the congregation experiencing hardship. All contributions and distributions will remain essentially anonymous, the highest level of the tzedakah mitzvah. Contributions have been incredibly generous — thanks to each of you who helped to rejuvenate this fund.

**Now, the not-so-noteworthy,
but still worth a mention:**

Face Coverings (masks):

Face coverings (masks) will continue to be optional for all services and events at TBT. In addition, please be respectful of others who may have the desire to social distance.

TBT's heating system:

The furnace unit that provides heat in the social hall has been a concern. In January, TBT was notified by the renter that the heat was not working. Steps were taken by the contractor to clean both the social hall and sanctuary furnaces to fix the problem.

Then again, the social hall was without heat. A second round of repairs were made to replace the furnace control parts that would allow consistency to the heating. To date, these repairs have been effective and no service charges have been incurred. Thanks to Barry G., TBT recovered lost rental revenue. Fingers crossed.

Chanukah Party Pix

Photos by Joe Rosenblatt









Paint Donations

With great appreciation to all of our “Paint Night” participants who generously donated money and time to complete the exterior painting of Temple Beth Torah...

Micki and Dennis Bellamy

Mara Dresner

Debra Ehrlich

David and Donna Forrest

Carol Gershenson

Judy and Marty Gold

Debra and Joe Hammer

Maureen Horowitz

Karen and Bob Klein

Rhoda and Fred London

Kathi and Eliot Mag

Ellen Sue Moses and Mark Gould

Sallyanne and Barry Scott

Helene Shapiro

Evelyn and AZ Soforenko

(hope we didn't miss anyone!)

IN MEMORY OF
Donald Klein, brother of Bob Klein
by Debra and Joseph Hammer
by Cheryl and John Hinze
by Rita and Harold Nevins

Oldie but Goodie

