



# Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism  
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***Our mission is to perpetuate Jewish life and identity through a welcoming community of spirituality, learning, service, joy and worship***

**MAY 2018 / IYAR — SIVAN 5778**

## From our Temple President

Dear members and friends,

The past month of April was busy with two Rabbi-led Shabbat services, a movie discussion and Havdalah, a lay-led Yom HaShoah remembrance, and of course the Women's Group fantastic yard and bake sale! The time and energy that went into planning and executing these events and the many folks who participated clearly speaks to the strength of our community. We are small but active. I'm grateful to see all the wonderful engagement of our members in these many services and gatherings.

Speaking of engagement, consider taking on an active role in temple life. Are you good with social media? Can you take on the THOI Facebook page and investigate other social media options to reach out to our local community? What about social action and advocating for a cause? Did you know that Rabbi Lynne Landsberg proposed that the THOI Board create a social action committee in Fall 2017 with the purpose of educating and engaging the congregation in important social work? The committee was created but, sadly, Rabbi Lynne was not able to take on leadership. Might you be interested in carrying on the work of tikkun olam and lead or co-lead the Lynne Landsberg Social Action Committee? Please reflect and consider these opportunities and reach out to a board member if you are interested.

As I mentioned last month, a rabbi search committee is in place and members are Ruth Chodrow, Doug Degen, Alan Goldenberg, Steve Rosenberg, Bonny Strassler, Patty Sutker and Richard Young. The committee is currently reviewing applications and setting up interviews with applicants to serve as interim rabbi for our temple. An interim rabbi will serve for one year so that we may have time for our congregation to rebuild and strengthen our trust in each other and the temple community. The committee is also working in the background to prepare us to search for a permanent rabbi, which will convene once an interim rabbi is in place. It is the committee's intention to move this personnel process along in a timely and positive manner with the temple's best interest at heart.

L'Shalom  
Bonny Strassler

## May Services and Events

- Rabbi-led Healing Service on May 5 at 10:00 am; oneg by Sue and Bonny
- Rabbi-led Shabbat Service on May 25 at 7:30—pulpit exchange with Paul Oakley from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; oneg by Degens and Youngs
- Coming June 3 is our Annual Meeting at 4 pm with dinner to follow. Details to be included next month.

## From the Rabbi's Desk

Dear Temple House of Israel Congregants and Friends,

Following Passover we observed Yom HaSho'ah (Holocaust Remembrance & Heroes Day), Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day), and Yom Ha'Aztma'ut (Israel Independence Day)), as well as Rosh Chodesh (new month) of Iyar. Just for good measure, Earth Day fell late this month.

We are still in the period of the counting of the Omer (numbering the time between Pesach (Passover), which deals with Redemption—being rescued from captivity and slavery, and Shavuot (Feast of Weeks), which marks Revelation—the encounter and individual communication of ALL the Hebrews/Israelites with G-d.

In May we will continue the counting of the Omer, arriving on May 3rd at L'ag Be'Omer, the 33rd day of the count, which is often seen as a semi-holiday. For those who observe semi-mourning rituals during the period of the Omer count, this is seen as a day on which those practices are relaxed, and it is viewed as a minor holiday. Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Reunification Da) is celebrated on May 13th which is also Mother's Day. Shortly after, on May 15th, we will note Rosh Chodesh for Sivan, the start of that month. On the 6th and 7th of Sivan (Saturday evening and Sunday and Monday, May 19th, 20th and 21st) we will finally come to the pilgrimage festival of Shavuot, the fiftieth day following Passover—at the conclusion of Sefirat HaOmer (the counting of the Omer), the period of seven weeks of seven days marking our spiritual journey.

May we all find meaning, strength, and blessings for our life in the course of this journey and may we move from captivity to liberation, from the narrow places to the wide expanses, from where G-d is not to the Place of G-d.

Of Note: On April 14th there was a Havdalah service and the showing of a film. Staying with the Yom HaSho'ah theme, we viewed "Skokie: Invaded but Not Conquered" - a follow up documentary from 2014 to the events at Skokie in the 1980s. This focused on the real events when the Neo-Nazi party in Chicago decided to hold a rally in Skokie, a suburb of Chicago, which was roughly 40% Jewish at that time, with the largest proportion of Holocaust survivors in the U.S. living there. The Nazi party parlayed the Skokie march into a series of court cases and major publicity, that eventually forced the city of Chicago to grant a permit for them to use Marquette Park, which was more what they really wanted. The story is chillingly relevant, given events in this region in the months past (Charlottesville), and even very recently (the threatened rally in Verona). This discussion was interest, there was a nice attendance, and a lot of desserts were provided, so all had a good time, and perhaps even learned something.

To Come: The planned service on the morning of May 5th will be a Healing Service. No Torah or Haftarah reading, and no formal liturgy; we will instead focus on healing prayers and chants, for whatever grief, loss, injury, distress, despair, or illness (and relating to anything else that you feel is in need of healing) of those present. This is not therapy, nor is it expected to 'fix' anything; it is hoped that it will help us all gain strength, courage and hope from those around us, and seeing that our tradition has resources to draw upon, allowing us to feel supported and upheld as we face the challenges of our lives.

May 25th's Shabbat service is a Pulpit Exchange. Rev. Paul Oakley will be joining us and delivering the sermon (Devar Torah) that evening, and we have invited members of his congregation in Waynesboro to join us. In return, I will be visiting the Waynesboro Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on Sunday the 27th and offering a sermon to that community—you are most welcome to join me there. It has been really uplifting in past, as have all the pulpit exchanges and interfaith activities. This is an excellent

## Rabbi (cont'd)

way to meet, get to know, and build bridges with those in other faith communities in our surroundings.

I will be attending a conference during parts of the 1st and 2nd weeks of June and will not be in town. In an emergency, please email or call me.

Finally, please note that I will be continuing to serve the community as rabbi until June 30th. After that I will not be available. I hope to make an opportunity available to speak with everyone who wishes to do so before that date.

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## Rabbi's Contact Information

Rabbi Joe may be reached by email at **RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com**. Other email addresses may not reach him in a timely fashion, or at all. He reads email regularly, except for Jewish holidays and Shabbat, when he does not use the computer.

**His cell phone number is 925-272-8563 (925-2-RAVJOE).**

Please note and use this number—messages left elsewhere are not checked regularly.

PLEASE CALL if you have any urgent messages or in case of an emergency, and please let Rabbi Joe know if you or anyone you know is ill or would want a call or visit for any reason. You are also invited to contact Rabbi Joe to arrange an appointment to meet. Rabbi Joe will be happy to make an appointment to speak with you, so that he can offer you his full, undivided attention.

## Women's Group

- This year's Yard/Bake Sale was a tremendous success. In great part this was due to the generous donations and the time and effort of the members of the Women's Group. Saying THANK YOU is hardly enough for all the organizational time, energy and effort put in by Elizabeth (and Ken, too!) Schwartz. Thanks to all who donated items, baked, and shopped; we brought in over \$1,800.
- Our next **Women's Group meeting will be held on May 20th at 1:00 pm at Beth's house.** A spring **pasta salad and drinks will be provided.** Please bring a dish to share and join us in making plans for our lay-led service and/or other ideas you may have.

## News from the Pews

- Ruth Chodrow was a featured speaker at the Harrisonburg Relay for Life event held April 6th on the JMU campus. Over 200 students and community members attended and raised funds for cancer research. Ruth and her mother, Vera Flint, both cancer survivors, walked the first lap with other survivors with the supportive students cheering them all on.
- **Mi Sheberach and Refuah Shelemach:** Continued thoughts and prayers for Shirley Brand, Leah Farmer, Steve Guberman, Joanne Simons (Carla Donley's aunt), Greg Ciszek's father and Dan Schorsch. For Greg Ciszek, Jim Clark, Michelle Clark, Tom Davis (Gail's husband), Kate Goldenberg, Byron Grove-Humphries, Sherry Lowe, Sue Solomon, Ellen Schorsch, Ellen Werther and Dennis Ward.
- Jan Kaufman is recovering from eye surgery.
- Janne Heifetz is recovering well following hip replacement surgery.
- Mazal Tov to Benn Legum and Penelope Ferguson on their recent marriage!

## April Donations

Thank you to those who support our small congregation with their much appreciated financial donations:

General Fund ..... Simona Aronow and Stephen Shaffer

## Celebrations

Sim Brand celebrates on May 1st  
Dan Schorsch is celebrating on May 3rd  
Susan Pereles has a birthday on May 4th  
Rachael Brody will be 33 years old on the 7th  
Sam Pereles celebrates on the 14th  
Larry Sutker is celebrating on May 24th  
Ruth Chodrow celebrates on the 30th



## Outreach

- ◆ The collected toiletries you've gathered from your various hotel stays have been donated to the **Valley Mission**. They are very much appreciated by those in need. Thank you!
- ◆ The wish list for **New Directions** includes household items (towels, washcloths, kitchenware, light bulbs and AA batteries, toilet paper and tissues), cleaning supplies (laundry detergent for HE washers, Swiffer Wet Jet pads, dishwasher detergent, dish soap and trash bags) and personal items (hand soap, deodorant, shampoo, and body wash). We'll collect all items in the social hall as we have before. Add your donations in the box in the social hall.
- ◆ **Washington and Lee's Hillel** is sponsoring 2 special programs. On **May 1, at 6:30 pm** there will be an **IDF panel discussion** with personal stories from 4 Israelis and 2 Americans, half who have served and half who have not served in the IDF. On **May 2 at 6:30** graphic novelist and artist **Miriam Libicki** will discuss her work "Strangers" and the immigration of Sudanese refugees to Israel.
- ◆ Mark for calendars for the next **Know Your Neighbor** gathering on **June 24, 4:00—7:00 pm**. We'll have a potluck dinner with fun and games at Oakdale Park in Bridgewater. Join congregants from Allen Chapel AME Church, Emmanuel Episcopal, the Islamic Center of the Shenandoah Valley, Temple House of Israel and Trinity Church for food and fellowship. Please bring a potluck dish to share.

## Judaica Shop

There are new items in our Judaica Shop, included in the display cabinets. You may find exactly what you're looking for! If you'd like to place a special order, please contact Marsha directly at [horsebaskets@gmail.com](mailto:horsebaskets@gmail.com).

## May Yahrzeits

Leah Barber	Ellna Byrne	Velma Byrne
Blanche Cohn	Joseph Cohn	Gloria Goldsmith
Ida Harris	Rosaline Kamerman	Heidi Kaplan
Morris Klotz	Abraham Kravitz	Joseph Oppenheim
Edward Patterson	Rose Pickus	Jack Printz
Max Raybin	William Robins	Frank Rubin
Clara Sebell	Mildred Schor	Flora Switzer
Moses Walters	Nettie Williams	Elbert Evans Ward

**IT'S FINALLY SPRING TIME!**



## Rabbi's Message

### *Aman Natan HaTorah*

Shavuot is the holiday that celebrates Revelation—the awesome and world-changing encounter with the living G-d at Mount Sinai. Out of that meeting came the Covenant between G-d and the Hebrews (“you shall be my people, and I shall be your god”, to which the people would respond “we shall do [the commandments] and we shall understand/listen”), the Aseret HaDibrot (the ten sayings, often mis-named the ten commandments), the Written Torah (specifically the Torah, but generally the Tanakh—the complete three part Bible of the Jews), and the Oral Torah (which serves as the basis for the further codification (Mishnah) and elucidation (Gemara) of the Torah, that together with additional commentaries makes up the Talmud). Revelation is usually considered to mean not only the encounter with God, but to encompass all of this material, and perhaps more.

Shavuot falls during the summer in our region. It comes seven weeks after Passover. That means we rarely have an opportunity to celebrate it as a community (because the schedule of planned services generally does not include it), or to include it in the regular sequence of events during Religious School. This year we will intercalate (add a leap month at the end of the Jewish calendar year), so until we come to Adar, all of the calendar events fall “early”.

Shavuot is a powerful symbol because it invokes both revelation of G-d, and the granting of G-d's greatest gift to humanity, Torah. Torah is widely understood broadly as the entire body of instruction, law, teaching, guidance, examples, exhortation, and encouragement that we have available to us, including both the religious teachings, and the secular knowledge that has been developed through the centuries.

Whether or not you believe that G-d gave all of this as a form of commandment and regardless of whether or not you perceive it as having any binding status on our behavior, morally, ethically, or religiously, it is nonetheless impossible not to regard it as a masterful and compelling work, comprising stories that plumb the depths and scale the heights of human experience. There are many other great pieces of literature, some other narratives of similar scale and scope and complexity, a few that strive to touch on the human condition in a similar fashion, but none I know of has so far had the same impact, inspiring literally millions of people across millennia in a myriad of ways.

For this reason, I feel, it is no longer an issue whether the text is ‘true’ or ‘unprovable’. On its own, it stands and speaks to untold numbers of people and influences them. It could be described as a shared meta-myth—a story that is commonly shared and known, and used to influence multiple cultures, religious, nations, peoples and populations. ‘Truth’ and ‘belief’ are not required—we all know the stories, and that shared knowledge gives us a language and a shorthand for communication deep and meaningful understandings. We in the Western world, at least, are all shaped and influenced by this text, no matter what faith or belief we may hold and follow.

For this reason alone it is well worth your while to engage with this material. It has much to offer, many lessons to teach. As the rabbis said in Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers), “Turn it, and turn it, for all is within it.” When we focus on the material, engage the text, wrestle with the stories, it becomes an ever-inspiring wellspring. It is not that we read it once, and know what is in it; although we do know the outline of the narrative, it is eternally new and fresh. This is so not because the text changes, but because we each change, and we come to the text as a different person than the one who read it previously. We have changed, and we bring different things, which means that we take different insights, understandings

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and meanings from the text each time we re-engage with it. Torah is truly our eternal tree of life.


Which reminds me that I want to urge you to consider a donation to the Torah maintenance and repair fund that has been established. Keeping the sifrei Torah (scrolls of the Torah) in good repair requires an ongoing and regular effort.

May this period of the counting of the Omer on our march towards Shavuot, and our engagement with the Torah now and in the future, bring to each of us many blessings and much joy.

Rabbi Joe

## As a Reminder

### You can contribute to Temple House of Israel in many ways:

1. We have met the challenge from an anonymous benefactor for our Torah's repair estimate. Additional funds will be needed to actually do the restoration. Contribute to our **Torah Restoration**, by making out your check to THOI and writing TRC OR "Torah Restoration" on the bottom. 
2. THOI is registered at **amazonsmile.com**. Any time you shop at Amazon simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) from the web browser on your computer or mobile device and a portion will be donated to THOI.
3. Our flamingoes have flown to Florida for the summer .... but contact Debbie if you'd like them to come back! [deb1130@hotmail.com](mailto:deb1130@hotmail.com).
4. Our presence on **Facebook** will potentially reach more Jews and non-Jews alike and will perhaps generate new members. **Please "like" and "follow" the THOI Facebook** page.

## Board Contacts

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