



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

OCTOBER 2017 / TISHREI—CHESHVAN 5778

President's Message

To our Temple House of Israel Community,

Have you heard? We are a small congregation. We sometimes wish we had what larger congregations have: a flush budget, a full-time rabbi, a variety of adult education and social groups. But the reality is we are a small congregation with benefits and strengths only becoming our small community. We really have all we need.

We are a family. We are involved in temple life. We hold ourselves responsible to the congregation. We are tenacious about keeping our Jewish community. We perpetuate continuity of the temple and membership.

But here is the most important characteristic about our congregation that underlies and supports all our strengths. We have sense of acceptance. Acceptance for the spectrum of practice and observance of all members. Acceptance of curious non-Jews, those converting, and those new to the area. We are accepting and welcoming. Welcoming and open. Open to the possibilities of what the future may bring, moving forward in a positive fashion that considers where we have been, but more importantly what we can grow to become.

So please ask yourself, "What can I contribute? How can I participate in this Jewish community? What strengths and talents can I share?"

The funny thing about a small congregation is just that, it is small. A small number attend service (always a minyan), a small number of people choose roles of leadership, a small number of people put together social activities. What is it about our small congregation that is important to you? What would you like more or less of? What is meaningful and keeps you coming back?

Take some time to think on these things with care and an open, tolerant mindset. We are a small congregation. Small is a benefit. Small is a strength. How can you add your strength to the greater community?

Bonny Strassler, temple president

Welcome New Members

**Mike and Laura Ackerman
Alan and Tumay Goldsmith**

A warm welcome to the new faces in our community.

Thanks!

Many thanks to Rabbi Dan Alexander and Rabbi Joe, cantorial soloist Laura Madeles, and temple president Bonny Strassler for kicking off our New Year with a wonderful set of services and activities. We had lots of good services to attend during Seli-chot, Rosh Hashonah, Taschlicht, and Yom Kippur as well as good food for all the accompanying meals. And speaking of meals, a huge thank you to Deb Austin, her daughter Taylor and Kyle Leister who helped us set up, serve and clear away all the food.

Thank you to Ruth Chodrow and the ritual committee for their work on making the High Holidays flow smoothly; to every congregant who helped make our high holiday celebrations so special. We appreciate everyone who brought food, who participated in the services, who helped set up and clean up, who helped change over prayerbooks and welcome visitors. To the oneg hostesses who have added so much to services with the lovely celebrations that follow; to Sarah Grove-Humphries who beautifies and enhances our service with her musical gifts; to all who helped enhance the celebrations for the holiday season with their efforts, contributions, assistance and delicious food. We couldn't have done it without all your help.

From the Rabbi's Desk

Dear Temple House of Israel Congregants and Friends,

Our experience of time is elastic. Often it seems to drag on forever, and things move slower than molasses in a jar outside on a freezing cold morning. Equally often, things whiz by in a flash, almost too quickly to register. I am coming to the sense that these are both true, but we tend towards one of the two poles predominantly at different times in our life. When I was young, time stretched out before me as an endless carpet, and the days seemed to go on forever. As I have gotten older, it all seems to move more quickly, and it feels as if the pace is increasing. I know, but am not sure how it happened that the High Holy Days have come and gone for this year; I find myself astonished and wondering how that happened, even as I can glance at my calendar and see the progress of the steady march of days gone by. It makes me all the more aware that the old adage '*carpe diem*' persists because it represents a truism.

I have to say that the Community Awareness Shabbat was a real joy and a highlight. If you missed it, please plan to attend the next one in February to help it be an even bigger and better event. In addition to congregants, there was a group from Mary Baldwin, clergy from other faiths and interested friends and neighbors.

Starting in October, I will be offering the **Introduction to Hebrew** course that teaches the Alefbet and vowels, some vocabulary and a smattering of grammar. Details on page 6.

Also coming this month: the return of **Biblical Hebrew** aka **Reading in Biblical Text**. A new name and format! We'll still be looking at a Biblical text for content, meaning, context, vocabulary and some grammatical matters. Details, page 6.

Time Out for a Better World

Rabbi's Message

As I write this, I am feeling deeply stressed and pressured—and perhaps you are, too.

In the month of Elul, we/Jews take time for introspection, self-examination and reflection with the idea of self-assessment and seeking to do better in the future. Ideally, we have a time to pause, look at the past, evaluate and draw lessons from

Rabbi's Message (con't)

what happened, the choices we made and why, and how that turned out, with the idea and hope that we can use that self knowledge to help guide ourselves moving forward. This is hard work, but it is meaningful and valuable when we can take it seriously and do it.

At the same time, I am feeling that the world around us is totally topsy-turvy and crazy—in Yiddish, what we call *meshugeneh*—busy and loud and insistent, and seeming to demand our attention, providing no opportunity for that necessary space or time to step back and reflect.

I am trying to reconcile the two. I ask myself, 'How do we maintain our balance, not tilting too far into one or the other, while keeping one foot firmly planted in each?' It appears to be a delicate dance that requires regular attention to hold steady. I think that I have stumbled on a partial answer for how to achieve that balance in the current environment, and I am offering it here. Of course, if you can add to it, or provide a better answer, I would like to know, if you are willing to share it with me.

In the secular world, we are bombarded with constant calls, texts, emails, tweets, Instagrams, face book feeds and headlines—images, information, news and alerts coming at us endlessly, insistently without cease. Disaster after disaster, crisis after crisis continue to pile on, one unexpected and almost unbelievable thing following the next, an endless barrage.

Because of the pace, we don't have the time to ever fully process the images and information from one before the next arrives, let alone finding ways to integrate it, to fully understand it, and find ways to cope and move forward.

This may be meat and potatoes for news junkies and talking heads, but for the rest of us, the real people, I believe we are overwhelmed and slammed by this onslaught—and it is not healthy.

The massive amount of information barreling at us does not, as it was intended, serve as a resource and a tool we can use in our dealings with the world: instead, it becomes an assault on us that chips away at our resources—stripping us of things like patience, attention, compassion, considered thought, and time, forcing us to be reactive, prey to our unfiltered emotional responses, responding in the moment, rather than allowing considered thought and application of our values in formulating responses.

I don't know, but it seems logical to me that this cycle of escalating emotional assaults and reactions is what is leading to the increase in rage at almost everything that I feel is being expressed so much more often than it has been in the past. And quite honestly, that is frightening to me.

Rage is a powerful emotion that negates thought, overrides logic, and pushes for instant response. It is negative, harmful, divisive, destructive and even dangerous. When an otherwise good person falls prey to rage, their true self, their core values are forgotten and suppressed. They are capable of terrible things that they would not do if they took a moment to reflect, things that they will deeply regret.

I believe that rage is not the same as anger; anger is a considered reaction, proportional to the cause, and responds in a more productive fashion. When you can tell someone that they have angered you and why, they have the opportunity to learn and change their behavior. If you become enraged and attack them, all that will be accomplished is you may feel momentarily better, but you will likely regret it, and they will likely become enraged with you in turn. This is a no-win road to nowhere.

What I suggest as a way to handle this cycle is an extension of the core Jewish concept of Shabbat—ceasing and resting. In usual terms, this involves taking a day

Rabbi's Message (con't)

once a week to disengage and reset, cutting off the assault of information for a time, allowing you to return to your baseline. A break from the never-ending news cycle seems a godsend.

The month of Elul provided that time of introspection. A month of intentionally taking time for looking inward and upward, rather than only outward, provided a prescription for sanity and healing. If the traditional Jewish tradition of refocusing during Elul was missed, perhaps you will choose to take time around Thanksgiving or the winter holidays or the days leading up to the secular new year. Whenever you choose, I do recommend that you at least consider the practice for your own wellbeing.

May your reflections and refocusing bring you calm, renew your sense of balance and help you find yourself amid the noise. May we all find strength, courage and the resources to work for peace and to fulfill the commandment to 'love your neighbor as yourself.'

I sincerely hope that your High Holy Day period was meaningful, uplifting and joyous, and that the year 5778 has begun well.

Rabbi Joe

Contacting the Rabbi

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 on Jewish Holidays or Shabbat, when he does not use the computer.

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

Telephone messages left at the temple number are only checked sporadically.

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

Thank you to Debbie Jacobs who has agreed to be the Women's Group treasurer! We're still in need of leadership—maybe in the form of a shared position? One month at a time? We have organized notebooks of past events and activities which will be a great help for the next people to take on the position to keep us running smoothly.

- Members of THOI will once again walk as **Team Tikvah**, participating in the **Greater Augusta Out of the Darkness Walk** on Saturday, **October 21**. Last year we walked in memory of Leah's beautiful granddaughter Sky and we are dedicating our walk to her once again. We have set \$1500 as our goal and we need to collect more to match that. Sadly this is a national epidemic, but the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is steadfast in their efforts to support survivors and help fight suicide. Half of the funds raised will come back to our greater Augusta area to fund services and programs here. Call Debbie Jacobs at 540-688-8058 or email her at deb1130@hotmail.com with questions. Register online directly to walk with us or to donate to the cause at <https://afsp.donordrive.com/> and look for Team Tikvah. Donations may also be mailed to American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 120 Wall Street, 29th Floor, New York, NY 10005, Attn: Greater Augusta Out of the Darkness Walk, TEAM TIKVAH.
- Our next meeting will be Sunday, **October 15th at 2 pm** in the social hall.

News from the Pews

- **Baruch dayan haemet** to the Clark family on their recent tragic loss of their son Adam. Please see details below for the memorial service.
- **Refuah Shelemach:** Wishing and praying for a speedy and full recovery for Greg Ciszek, Kate Goldenberg, Tom Davis (Gail's husband) Dennis Ward and Rabbi Lynne Landsberg.
- **Prayers for healing and wholeness** to Jim Clark, and Michelle as well, Leah Farmer, Nancy Witt, Steve Guberman, Sue Solomon, Shirley Brand, Dan Schorsch, and Joanne Simons (Carla Donley's aunt) .
- Mazel tov to Ruth Chodrow and Vera Flint on the recent recognition of both Rose and Philip for their respective professional work.
- **Condolences** to Bonny Strassler and her family on the loss of her 96- year-old grandmother, Celia Lewandowski. Services were held in Buffalo.

Special Service

A memorial service will be held for Adam Clark, son of Michelle and Jim Clark, in the temple sanctuary on Sunday, October 8, 2017 at 4:00 pm. Adam was born November 15, 1980 and died at age 36 on September 17th. A reception will follow in the social hall. In lieu of flowers or gifts, Adam's family recommends donations in his memory to the building fund or to support the Women's Group at Temple House of Israel, P.O. Box 1412, Staunton VA 24402.

Religious School

Shanah Tovah from Religious School and Preschool!

We've had a wonderful start to our year! A warm welcome to all of our new students and a hearty welcome back to all of our returning students. Our devoted teachers have been working hard to help deepen our understanding of Hebrew and Torah. Please join us for a celebration of **Simchat Torah on Sunday, October 15th at 11:00 am.**

PreSchool

This year we also enthusiastically welcome our new preschool children aged 0-5 and their parents to our new program on Religious School mornings at 11:30. Everyone has been enjoying crafts, stories and songs together. We hope you will join us!

We are also excited about our new **family Shabbat services** each month! In October we will be having a fun-filled Havdalah service and enjoy some 'Pizza in the Hut' in celebration of **Sukkot on Saturday, Oct. 7th at 6:00 pm.** Please contact Dara Hall at mddmhall@verizon.net for more information.

SHORTY

SHORTY has been having interesting discussions as we read from "*Why Be Different: A Look into Judaism*", and we have discovered our personality types and leadership styles. Our continuing education is helping to connect us as a group and helping us grow as individuals. Our question this week—"Can we control our destiny?" Please contact Becky Mintzer at rem82398@aol.com to join.

Join us for our **next meeting** at Mr. J's in Harmony Square, Harrisonburg, on Sunday, **October 22nd at 12:45 pm.**

We are excited to share our new t-shirt motto which describes our beliefs: SHORTY small but mighty; A few can change the world!

October Celebrations

Happy Birthdays

Marsha Pillet celebrates on October 21

Benn Legum celebrates on the 23rd

Bonnie Brown celebrates on the 28th



Fall Classes

Rabbi Joe is offering **Introduction to Hebrew: the Alefbet & Vowels** which will meet at 6:00—9:00 pm on Thursdays. This is a five session course meeting on October 19th and 26th, November 2nd, 9th and 16th at Temple House of Israel. We move rapidly and it requires work at home, but it is possible by the end of this course to decode/sound out most Hebrew you encounter. And for those of you who want more, I am happy to say that Ruth Chodrow is offering a follow-on to this course. The course is FREE, and open to anyone who wishes to commit to attending the sessions. No pre-requisites and no need to register in advance. Simply show up on the 19th of October!

Readings in Biblical Text will meet on Sundays from 3:30 until 5:00 pm., but the class will now meet in two locations. Effectively it will be the same class, but attendance will determine the content of each session. Students are free to come to either or both locations. If the majority of the students attend in both locations, we will simply treat it as a continuing class; otherwise we will act as if it were to be two sections of the same course. Meetings in Staunton at Temple House of Israel will be October 15, November 12 and December 17. Meetings at Beth El in Harrisonburg will be October 29, November 19 and December 31. This course is FREE. One copy of the text to be read will be provided to each student. Rabbi Joe will select the first text; the students will help select the others. The prerequisite is sufficient familiarity with the Hebrew Alefbet to decode and follow the conversation. Please contact Rabbi Joe to register for the course—rabbijoe@hotmail.com.

Know Your Neighbor

Temple House of Israel is a participant in the KYN—**Know Your Neighbor**—program. This program grew out of the Interfaith Lenten series that started up two years ago. Soon we'll have a chance to enjoy a meal, have some fun, and get to know our Christian and Muslim neighbors.

Our next activity is on **Sunday, October 22 at Emmanuel Episcopal Church** in Staunton from 1:30—3:30. We are asking people to bring a potluck dish (no pork, please) and some non-perishable goods. First, we'll have a potluck lunch. Then we'll form into teams and each team will create a sculpture out of the cans, boxes and packages of food. Winners will be announced and then all the items will be donated to local food pantries.

If you can't come to our activity but would like to support our efforts, please bring non-perishable goods to the temple before October 21. We'll make sure your items get to Emmanuel. But if you can, please come! Eat, get creative and make new friends, and help the community in the process.

Donations

Thank you to the following people who support our small congregation with their financial donations:

For the building fund	David and Carolyn Hockstein
.....	Doug and Martha Degen
.....	Mike and Lauren Ackerman
For the general fund	Joseph Siron
.....	Angela Daniel
In Memory of Dianne Mason	Doug and Martha Degen
.....	Rich and Beth Young
For Yizkor	Linda Blazer

October Yahrzeits

We honor the memories of our loved ones at this season

Annette Biatch	Nina Finkel	Morris Geller
Samuel Goldenberg	Shirley Goldenberg	Gussie Greenspan
Nathan Harrison	Joseph Kaplan	Annie Klotz
Mary Kravitz	Leonard Legum	Kenneth Lussen
Irving Schwartz	Henrietta Siegel	Benjamin Sragovitz
Babette Switzer	Moses Walters	Leon Weinberg

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Rabbi	Joe Blair	925-272-8573	RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com

SPECIAL INVITATION



WELCOME TO Aleeza and Mike Wilkins.
They've generously invited everyone to their home for a
dairy potluck lunch in their Sukkah on Sunday 10/8 at 1 pm.
107 Lake Avenue in Staunton.
Please call/text Aleeza to RSVP at [240-750-0826](tel:240-750-0826)

We look forward to seeing you there!
Aleeza and Mike Wilkins
